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TWO NEW SERIALS COMMENCE THIS WEEK.

# THE LONDON READER

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FOR THE WEEK ENDING MAY 12, 1900.

[PAID ONE PENNY.]



"OH, VIOLET!" HE SAID, "IF YOU WERE ONLY FREE!"

## FATE'S CRUELTY.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

THE midday sun was doing his best to pierce the thick foliage of the giant trees that stretched their branches over a limpid stream, meandering along, like a silver ribbon, through one of the prettiest parts of Derbyshire. It bubbled in miniature waterfalls over rocks covered with emerald mosses, dashed its bright spray on the young ferns, leaving glistening dewdrops on the tender fronds, and went on gaily and merrily reflecting in its sunlit ripples and sparkling shallows the light fleecy clouds that drifted overhead across the deep blue of the sky.

On its banks, leaning against the trunk of a giant oak, sat a young girl. Her hat, full of wild blooms, lay on the ground beside her, and her arms

crossed above her head pillow'd it, while her large eyes were fixed dreamily and wistfully on the rippling water. This was her favourite haunt. Day after day she sought it in preference to any other, and dreamed hours away—in the beautiful solitude, when the sun shone and its beams threw a golden glamour around her, and the birds caroled their love-songs, and the woolly winds went softly by, laden with the scents of spring.

In the autumn and winter her visits were fewer and shorter, but when springtime came—joyous springtime—then she revelled in the sunshine, and the prospect of long glorious days that she could spend by the stream, with her books and flowers; and each Mayday seemed brighter and fresher than the last to her young, ardent mind. There was a bewitching novelty in spring to her, after the long, drear, dark, winter days. To note the fledgling of the little birds, the sprouting of the young grasses, the gold of the buttercups appearing in the meadows beside their paler brethren the primroses, the

delicate tracery of green on the trees, to mark the honeysuckle leaves appearing on the hedge-rows, and the freckled cowslips in the fields, was pure joy to her.

For Violet Bishop was a lover of nature, and revelled in it, caring little for the restraint and conventionalities of society of which, in truth, she knew little, and was quite content with the rustic village in which her parents resided.

In this she differed greatly from her parents, or, at any rate, one of them, for her mother was of the world worldly—vain, shallow, ambitious—and looked back with longing, aching eyes to that gay world of fashion which for a time she had adorned.

But Mr. Bishop's speculations on the Stock Exchange had been the reverse of successful, and after a few years of brilliant display and lavish expenditure, he woke one morning to find himself a ruined man, with nothing saved from the wreck of his once promising fortunes but a couple of hundred a year, which he had secured to his wife by marriage settlement, and a pretty little

cottage in Derbyshire, to which he had been in the habit of retiring for a week or two when press of business permitted it, and which proved a haven of peace to him in the troublous, stormy days that followed his failure.

He was a philosopher, to a certain extent; and though regretting, secretly, his horses and carriages, his clubs, his grand friends, and countless luxuries, accepted his new life calmly and with tolerable complaisance, and did not echo his partner's sighs and complaints.

She could not forget the adulation and homage which her wealth and beauty combined had commanded, and pined openly for the good things she had lost; fretting unceasingly, in such fashion that her good looks suffered, and she became shrivelled, haggard, and discontented-looking, though traces of her former loveliness still remained, in the soft, yellow locks framing her face; in the large violet eyes and regular features—features that were reproduced in her elder daughter, who was five years old when the crash came.

Three years later another child was born—a little girl, who had her father's dark hair and soft brown eyes. Mrs. Bishop, however, favoured and petted her first-born, because she so curiously resembled her in appearance, though in temperament she was totally different, being more honourable, unselfish and sweet-tempered than her mother; with more force of character, and a great capacity for suffering through the tenderness of her feelings for others, and her affectionateness.

It was through this child that Mrs. Bishop hoped to regain something of her lost grandeur and happiness. Violet was very beautiful, and she thought that she might attract a wealthy suitor who would be liberal to parents and not grudging as to settlements, thereby enabling them to at least pass the season in town, and revisit those haunts of fashion which the weak, vain woman loved. It is true her daughter's temperament was a slight drawback to her plans, and threatened checkmate to her game.

Still she relied on the great love she knew her child bore her to make all come right in the end; and perhaps she did not reckon without her host, for who should know a daughter's nature if not a mother!

Stoutly she had combated the girl's desire to do something to help their slender finances—to teach or copy, or play the part of amanuensis to some elderly man or woman. It was not lady-like. It would lower their social position. Heaven save the mark! As a nursery governess—which was all she was qualified for, for her education had not been of the Girton type, and she was far from being the stern blue-stocking, with brain crammed full of Algebra, Latin, and Greek, which people nowadays like to have their hapless infants instructed by—she would get no more than servant's wages, and hold a position about equal to that of a lady's maid, and, moreover, be unable to rise to anything, and have no prospect before her but a lonely, desolate old age, and death in a garret or the workhouse.

By this reasoning Mrs. Bishop had brought Violet to look with mistrust and reluctance on a governess's life; but she had also failed to implant into the girl's pure mind that love of Mammon which she felt so strongly.

Up to the present it had not mattered much, for men of any sort and description were few and far between at Sparr, while eligibles were absolutely nil. She had one hope, and one only.

About three miles distant from the village where they lived was Sparr Hall, one of the residences of Lord Desbro, an elderly and dissipated peer, with whom the Bishops had had a slight acquaintance in their palmy days—an acquaintance which she was quite ready to renew if she had the slightest chance. Up to the present, however, there had not been the ghost of one.

During the ten years they had lived at Sparr Lord Desbro had not once visited his Derbyshire property. At first it had been let to a rich shoddy manufacturer, who dispensed magnificent hospitalities to the bigwigs of the county, and ignored such small fry as the Bishops, to their burning indignation and annoyance, and for the

last three years it had been empty; its shattered windows and grass-grown drive showing that its owner did not honour it with many visits, or take a very large amount of interest in his big, ugly house, or its lovely grounds and park.

Rumour, however, said this was all to be altered now. The Earl was gouty and rheumatic, and the fashionable London physicians had advised a course of the Derbyshire waters; and the big white house was metaphorically having its pinafore taken off, and its hands and face washed, and receiving a general furnishing up—not before it wanted it.

Mrs. Bishop watched these preparations with eager eyes, and though ordinarily the most lazy and indolent of women, had twice, by a supreme effort, walked to the Hall, and watched with her own eyes carts leaving bundles there, and workmen busy hammering and adjusting draperies, and maid-servants cleaning and bustling about.

It seemed to put new life into the languid frame, to give an interest to existence which it had lacked for many a day; and she talked long and earnestly to her husband; laying down her plans, and instructing him how to act, and what to do; and he in his turn caught some of her ardour, and, being inflamed by it, promised to do his best to get this big fly to walk into their parlour and see his beautiful child.

Neither of them thought of his age, of his hoary head and gouty, trembling limbs—trembling and gouty in the old days; and how much more so now, with the added weight of ten years, none too well nor healthfully spent.

They thought of nothing but his title, position, possessions, and those many golden guineas, some of which they wished so ardently would fall into their pockets, and alter the condition of things for them.

So as the spring days lengthened, and the leaves grew thicker, and the sun's rays stronger, they strained every nerve to make their cottage as pretty inwardly as it was outwardly, and supply Violet with some pretty, simple dress likely to enhance her fresh, young beauty.

They were extremely simple and inexpensive, of course; but then Mrs. Bishop reasoned that at sixteen a girl does not require much adoring, and doubtless she was right.

Violet's curly, that shone like burnished gold in the sunshine, her creamy skin, and big black-lashed violet eyes, did not require a costly setting; her face was so sweet and lovely, so unutterably beautiful, that dress could neither enhance nor mar it.

It was perfect; and perfect it looked as she sat under the shade of the giant oak, the sunbeams filtering through the thick leafage here and there, and touching her hair to brighter radiance, while the shadows made the dark eyes look deeper and softer, as they gazed dreamily out over the rippling stream.

She was so absorbed with her day-dreams, her castles in the air, her romantic fancies, which ran like a thread of gold through the warp and woof of her narrow and uneventful life, that she did not hear the light patter of little feet on the sward, and started violently when a small hand was laid on hers, and a small voice said,—

"Violet, you are to come home at once, mother wants you!"

"Does she, darling?" responded the young girl, turning a look of deep and tender affection on the child, whom she loved better than anyone else on earth, with an intensity and devotion that was astonishing. "What does she want me for?"

"To try on some new frocks," declared the eight-year-old, who had a difficulty with her R's.

"New frocks!" echoed Violet in surprise.

"Why, I had two last week!"

"Yes, and there are two more now being cut out, and I know what it's for!" said Poppy, nodding her dark head wisely.

"Do you? I don't," and the elder sister turned a bewildered glance on the younger.

"Yes; they mean to mawwy you, Vi!"

"Oh, Poppy! Don't be ridiculous!" exclaimed the girl, quickly, with a laugh; but the laugh was uneasy and strained, and the bright colour flushed uncertainly in her cheek.

"I'm not ridiculous," returned Poppy, with a great show of dignity. "I heard father say, the other day, that the best thing to happen for us would be your mawwyng a wif man, and now there's one here you know!"

"What you mean?" cried her sister, in alarm.

"Lord Desbro arrived at the Hall to-day, and dad means to call on him to-morrow and to ask him to dinner."

"But—but—" stammered Violet, astounded and confounded by this intelligence. "How can father ask him?"

"Why, wive his tongue!" replied practical Poppy.

"I don't mean that. How can father ask a nobleman to dine in a little place like ours—a man who is accustomed to men-servants and grand things? What would he think of Susan?"

"Susan doesn't look bad when her face is clean and she has a cap and apron on, like Mrs. Pringle's maid wears," said precocious Poppy.

"But her face never is clean," objected the other; "and she doesn't possess a smart apron, like Mrs. Pringle's housemaid."

"Yes, she does. Mother bought it for her yesterday, when she was at Gleebury."

"Where has the money come from?" murmured Violet, a shadow falling over her bright face; for she knew only too well how scarce a commodity money was at the Cottage, and felt that the fact that some was being spent meant her mother had some ulterior motive in view, and that a serious one; and at her sister's words across her mind flashed the remembrance of many hints that had fallen from the maternal lips as to the value of beauty, and the good things it might win the possessor.

"Mother sold her amethyst," replied Poppy. "Her amethyst!"

"Yes. You're surprised, so was I," with comical gravity; "but dad said she never wore them, and never would have a chance unless some money could be got, and so he took them to Gleebury; and I saw mother with a heap of golden money, and she's spent a lot for you. How I wish I was going to have some new things," and the little coquette sighed enviously.

"Never mind, dear," said Violet, consolingly. "You shall have that white dress of mine that you like."

"May I? Oh! you are a good sis," and she fell upon her, and embraced her rapturously.

"Come, now, we had better go home," and, rising, the girl cast a last glance at the sunlit stream and the blue sky, and the bright flowers—a glance that was a trifle wistful; and then, taking the child's hand, went slowly towards the cottage.

## CHAPTER II.

A WEEK after the Earl of Desbro was established in his Derbyshire home he received a visit from Gerald Bishop, Esq., who reminded him that they had met before in London, and made himself so very agreeable that the gouty peer was enchanted with him, and asked him to dine with him the next night.

The fact was, the London season was in full swing, and the Earl was lonely, having none of his usual cronies available; and the bright, chatty conversation of the ex-stockbroker made him forget—for the time, at any rate—the terrible twinges of gout that assailed him now and then, and he was quite ready to be amused, and a trifle too old to be critical.

When a man has turned sixty he doesn't distinguish so well between one of his own order and one of a lower class, and is not so particular as to the cut of his acquaintances' clothes.

Moreover, his sight was failing, and he did not see that Gerald Bishop's coat was shabby, and his linen not irreproachable; he only realised that he was gay and talkative, could tell a racy anecdote with point and spirit, and had a fund of amusing stories.

So he welcomed him warmly, and after a while accepted an invitation to go to the Cottage, and

see some rare orchids that a friend had sent Bishop from the Congo.

All the inmates of the little white house, with its rose-covered porch and thatched roof, were in a state of flurry and excitement on the afternoon when he was expected.

Susan had been pulled into shape, and drilled over and over again as to how she was to announce him, &c.; and Mrs. Bishop had exerted herself, and, with the help of her daughters, made the rooms look bright and pretty with flowers, and made some appetising trifles for the afternoon tea, which was what they thought best and safest to offer their noble guest.

They were all sitting in the drawing-room, Mrs. Bishop, radiant with pride, and flushed from recent exertions, looking quite young and handsome; her husband pacing rather restlessly to and fro; Poppy playing with the poodle, who had been washed for the occasion; and Violet sitting in an easy-chair embroidering roses on satin, despite her mother's expostulations. But she was doing it for a lady who paid liberally for the work, and wanted to get it finished by the next night; and, besides, it gave her an excuse for keeping her eyes down, and she did not want to encounter those of the elderly peer.

She had met him once in the lanes, and, as he drove by, he favoured her with an admiring leer from his bloodshot eyes, that sent a cold shudder through her from head to foot.

The sound of wheels made her start and look up from her work, and she saw a magnificent carriage, drawn by a pair of high-stepping grays, stop at the door.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Bishop, and he hastened out to receive his guest, and smooth over any blunders Susan might make.

A minute or two later he returned, with the old peer leaning on his arm, and supporting himself as well on a stout stick.

As he presented him to his wife and daughters the Earl smiled, disclosing gums that were nearly toothless, and that made him look horrible and munkey-like.

"Delighted to make your acquaintance!" he said, as he shook hands, and his bleared eyes resting some time on Violet's fair face. "Bishop, you've no right to hide such beauties as your wife and daughter! They're fitted to shine at a Court!"

Mrs. Bishop beamed with delight at this compliment; but Violet turned cold and faint as she heard his words and encountered his glance.

"I don't want to hide them," put in the husband and father, hastily. "But when a man's poor he can't take his family about as much as he would like; and my wife, being delicate, can't walk far."

What about the walk to Sparr Hall and back?

"Ah! I hope you'll make use of my carriages whenever you want them," said the sexagenarian, eagerly, looking at his hostess admiringly, for, with the flush and excitement, she was looking not more than ten years her daughter's senior.

"Thanks. You are very kind," she returned, with that same expression of manner that had charmed so many in the old days. "It will be a great pleasure to me to see the beautiful country that lies about. I have often longed to do so, and never been able to gratify the desire."

"You can now. I have three carriages down here," a little boastfully. "One at any time will be at your disposal."

"You are more than kind," struck in Bishop.

"Pooh! nothing! I shall be honoured by your wife and daughter using them. If I did not know," turning with a would-be gallant air to the elder lady—"I should say your wife and her sister, there looks so little difference between you."

"You flatter me," murmured Mrs. Bishop, pleased and embarrassed.

"Is that another daughter?" indicating Poppy by a wave of his white, beruffled hand.

"Yes. That is my youngest."

"You have no sons, your husband tells me."

"No."

"Perhaps it is well. Young men are apt to get into trouble!"

"Yes."

"Now, with daughters it is different. You keep them at home until they are of a marriageable age, and then—you marry them!" and again his audacious old eyes wandered to Violet, and rested on her blonde head.

"If you can," laughed Bishop.

"You'll have no difficulty," replied the Earl significantly, pointing his speech by another glance in the lovely girl's direction which, fortunately for her, she did not see.

"I hope not," returned her father, in a low tone, meant only for Lord Desbro's ear. "I am anxious to get her well settled before I die. My death-bed will be easier; for then I shall know she will have the power to look after her young sister, and her mother too, if I go first!"

It was a bold speech to make, but Bishop had not been continually in the Earl's society for nearly a month without knowing something of his man, and he was well aware female loveliness was his weak point. He had had two wives already, and both had been singularly beautiful women, and both, though high-born, penniless. His third wife, as well as being penniless, might be a nobody as far as pedigree went, though beauty has its own aristocracy.

"You've only got to exhibit your daughter," chuckled the Earl; "her face will do the rest!"

"There is no one to exhibit her to in this remote place," smiled Bishop.

"Do you call me nobody?" snarled his noble guest.

"No, my lord; but you would hardly deign to cast a second glance in Violet's direction, or give a thought to her as becoming your wife!"

"Not so sure of that!" mumbled the old sinner, in low tones, yet not so low but that Bishop's sharp ears caught the words. "Like a pretty face better than anything else in the world!"

"But show me your flowers," he added aloud, impudently. "I want to see if you have any orchids that I haven't. I think not," with one of his detestable chuckles. "I have given five hundred for a single plant before now!"

"A large sum," observed his hostess.

"Perhaps; but I never let the price of a thing stand in the way when I want to possess it," and almost unconsciously his glance wandered again to the down-bent graceful head, with its crown of burnished tresses.

"A very good plan to go on if you can afford it," put in the ex-stockbroker.

"I've found it answer," replied the most noble Arthur, as he rose with considerable difficulty, and hobbled after his host.

"Aren't the ladies coming?" he queried, pausing at the door.

"Of course," said Bishop, hastily. "Alice—Violet, we can't go without you," and at a sign from her mother the girl rose reluctantly, and went out with the others to the garden, which was the only place really well kept.

Mr. Bishop's hobby was flowers, and he spent a large portion of his time digging and delving, potting and pruning; and the result was satisfactory in the highest degree, while in the small glass-house, which he had built himself, was a collection of orchids whose lovely blooms made the place look like fairy-land.

"By Jupiter! you have some beauties," exclaimed the Earl. "I envy you this," touching one delicate little plant, whose blossom resembled a man-in-armour—there being a distinct helmet, breast-plate, and arm-pieces.

"You shall envy me no longer," returned Bishop. "Pray accept it," and taking down the rustic basket in which it grew, he presented it to his guest, who protested he couldn't think of taking it, and ended by doing so, and it was in a very urban frame of mind that he went back to the drawing-room to partake of Mrs. Bishop's tea and cakes.

"When will you bring the ladies to see my collection?" he asked as he rose to leave.

"At any time, and on any day that will be convenient to you," returned his obliging friend.

"Come to-morrow; the sooner the better!"

"At what time?"

"Ooz. I must give you some luncheon first," turning to Violet, "to fortify you for the inspec-

tion, as there are not only orchids to be seen at the Hall, but houses full of other curious blossoms. Are you interested in such things, Miss Bishop?"

"Yes, I am very fond of flowers," she replied, shyly.

"Then I hope you will let me send you some."

"Thank you," she responded, timidly yet quickly. "But we have so many here!"

"Yes, but not the rare sorts that are grown in my house. You must let me send you some of them."

"My daughter will be delighted to accept them," put in Bishop, with a bland smile.

"That's right," and then the noble lord shook hands all round and hobbled off to his carriage, and was driven off at a great rate in a cloud of dust, caused by the prancing and rearing of the high-spirited horses.

The next day the whole Bishop family were surprised to see a carriage turn in at their gates and drive up to the door, but Gerald's face beamed with delight when he recognized Lord Desbro's livery.

"Send to take us over to the Hall!" he exclaimed, with a triumphant smile, as he hastened down to help numb-skull Susan, who stood in the open doorway, pleating a fold of her dirty apron between her fat fingers, and stirring helplessly at the smart groom who was delivering his message glibly.

The master of the cottage soon learnt that his surprise was correct, and went up to hasten on his wife and daughters in their toilet, which was soon completed, and in a short time they were driving through the flower-decked lanes; Mrs. Bishop and her spouse supremely happy and content, Poppy delighted with the novelty, for she had never been in a carriage before, and Violet silent and oppressed with an ominous sense of coming evil.

Lord Desbro met them at the door, and the glance of admiration he favoured Violet with was so unmistakable that her parents felt a fresh accession of content and happiness.

After they had removed their hats they were ushered into the dining-room, a huge gloomy apartment, where an elaborate luncheon was laid out, to which the ex-stockbroker and his wife did ample justice, though their children, from widely different reasons, did not seem to appreciate it quite so much.

Poppy was overawed by all the grandeur and magnificence, and the presence of the men-servants, and Violet dreaded to encounter the leering glance of those bleared eyes, that so often travelled in her direction.

"What do you think of these?" demanded the Earl of the girl, as later on they stood in the conservatory, to all intents and purposes alone, for the others were down at the further end hidden by a mass of palms and tropical flowers.

"They are very beautiful!" she replied, trying to speak steadily. "What are they?"

"The golden-rayed lily of Japan. Let me give you one," and stretching up to the sweet blossom with some difficulty he detached it and gave it her.

"Thanks; it is lovely!"

"Yes, they are pretty, all of them," and he indicated the rows of waxen blossoms with a wave of his hand.

"They are lovely! I could stay a week looking at them!" she said, enthusiastically, forgetting her horror of her companion in her delight.

"There's no reason why you shouldn't," he said, rather eagerly. "You can come whenever you please, and stay as long as you like."

"Thank you," she rejoined, coldly.

"Money's grand thing," he went on. "It buys you all you want."

"Not all," she corrected, timidly. "Well, nearly all. There's not much can't be bought for money. One can gratify most tastes and longings. Do you care for money, Miss Bishop?" he added, eying her keenly.

"No. I have never been used to it," she answered, simply.

"But don't you think you would like what it

would purchase you?—diamonds, laces, pretty dresses! All women like finery!"

"I think I can do without it."

"You're young yet. Your father tells me only sixteen. Wait awhile; when you are older your tastes will differ."

"I hope not."

"I am sure they will," he declared, dogmatically. "You'll want to be a leader of fashion, and go to Court and wear jewels and feathers, and make other women die with envy!"

"That I am sure I never shall;" and with a barely concealed gesture of disgust she walked rapidly on and joined her parents.

After that Lord Desbro's visits to the Cottage became regular events, and the presents he sent a great boon to its inmates, though Violet hated to touch the splendid wine, the ducklings, chickens, jellies, fruits and things that came two or three times a week, while she seldom drove in the carriage, framing all sorts of excuses to escape doing so; and her manner to her ancient admirer was as cold as she dared make it, for her father's hints and remarks had been such that she could not mistake them, and she knew he would be glad enough for her to become Countess of Desbro—a fate which she shuddered merely to contemplate.

The proposal she dreaded came at last!

Summer had passed and early autumn. It was the end of October. The fallen leaves lay sodden on the wet grasses; a mist hung over the distant hills; the air was sharp and chilly.

Violet felt cold, though she was sitting close to the fire; but then she was in what they called the breakfast-room, and which was really the apartment which they chiefly used.

She was busily embroidering, and did not hear the door open, so it startled her considerably when Lord Desbro's husky tones fell on her ear.

"All alone, Miss Bishop?"

"Yes, I am alone," she responded, nervously rising, and laying her fingers reluctantly in his outstretched palm. "Mother has gone out driving, as I suppose you know, in your landau with Poppy."

"Ah, yes; I believe the carriage was to come here this afternoon. I feared you might have gone too."

"I very seldom go," she rejoined, pointedly.

"No. Well, at any rate, I'm glad you didn't go to-day;" and then his eyes wandered round the room, and he mentally told himself that he should win this beautiful young girl whom he coveted.

It was a dreary room, smelling of must and mould, damp stains visible on its bare walls, guiltless of pictures or ornaments, the furniture broken, timeworn and battered; the carpet old, faded, and ragged; even the cheery blaze of the fire leaping and roaring up the chimney failed to make it look bright or pleasant.

It was not likely this penurious lass would refuse his wealth and the comforts it would bring in its train.

He felt very sure of his answer as he hobbled to the easy chair beside the one on which she was sitting, and repeated his remark.

"I don't think it a pleasant day for driving in an open carriage" she returned, wishing herself anywhere but there, with this dreadful old man leering at her.

"I would have sent the brougham," he declared, eagerly, "if I had known you preferred it to the landau."

"I have no choice," she replied, coldly, trying to steady the fingers that trembled pitifully as they held the delicate silks.

"Don't you care for driving?"

"I prefer walking."

"Your tastes seem simple!"

"I hope so."

"And you really don't care for wealth and position?"

"No."

"Well, then, I wish you'd try and care for me."

"Lord Desbro!"

The work slipped from her hands, and she sat

with wide-open eyes, and cheeks flushing and paling, for though she had thought this might happen, still the actual fact of his proposing shocked her inexpressibly—he seemed so old, so feeble, to be thinking of marriage.

It seemed to her that preparing for the next world would be a more suitable occupation for this patriarch, who had already entered the holy state twice.

"Have I startled you?" he inquired, trying to speak tenderly.

"Yes, that is, I don't know," she stammered.

"Hasn't it struck you that I was growing very fond of you? Didn't you notice that I came here often, and directed most of my attention to you?"

"I—I haven't noticed it."

"You are not a vain girl."

"I hope not."

"Most women would have noticed the attentions of a man in my position."

"I—think—I am—different—from most girls."

"You must be. I shall like that all the better in my wife."

"Your wife!" she gasped, horror and dismay on her white face.

"Yes. That's what I want you to be, my dear. My wife, my Countess, Lady Desbro," laying his claw-like hand on her fair soft one. "Of course you'll consent," with a smile that displayed his toothless gums.

"Consent," she repeated, a sharp ring of pain in her voice. "Oh! I could not, I could not!" and tearing her hand from his grasp, she fled from the room, leaving her elderly admirer speechless with surprise and anger.

### CHAPTER III.

"MOTHER, won't anything else do?"

"No."

"I will work very, very hard to make money enough to lift you out of this dreadful state of poverty."

"You need not work at all as his wife."

"But mother—he is so old. Old enough to be your grandfather!"

"He will have the sense you lack."

"And—he is not—a nice old man."

"You are hypercritical, Violet."

"Oh, mother!"

"You have the power to save me and your poor young sister from a life of wretchedness, but you are hard and selfish, and will not do so."

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Violet again, twining her fingers nervously one within the other. "Don't say that, pray. You know the chief aim of my life is to make you both happy."

Bat Mrs. Bishop declined to say anything and maintained a would-be dignified, and certainly sulky, silence. She was bitterly disappointed at her daughter's continued refusal of the Earl, for things had not been going well with them.

Mrs. Bishop had died of lung disease at the beginning of the winter; and now that spring was brightening all the earth with the touch of her fairy fingers, the laburnum, "dropping wells of fire," hung its golden blooms in graceful festoons, the lilac was in full bloom, the hyacinth rearing its pretty head, the almond trees shedding their blossoms and their perfume on the balmy air, ruin stared her in the face, and she knew not where to look for money wherewith to pay the butcher, and baker, and candlestick maker.

It seemed so hard to the vain, frivolous woman that luxury and comfort should be within her grasp and that the folly of her child should keep it from her. If Lord Desbro had asked her, after a decent period of mourning, she would gladly and thankfully have accepted him.

Bat he wanted the undeveloped bud, not the full-blown blossom. He coveted the daughter, and gave not a single thought to the mother. And so matters stood on that bright spring morning.

The peer was once more installed at Spar Hall, and once more presents of fruits and

wine were arriving at the Cottage; and once more hope revived in the mother's breast, and fear in the daughter's.

"Mother, you know I mean that!" said the poor girl, timidly, after a long pause.

"How can I believe it?" exclaimed Mrs. Bishop, a hard look settling on her face. "You know my health is wretched, that I shall soon follow my poor husband, and yet you won't do what you know would comfort my last hours."

"Mother!"

It was like a cry of pain wrung from a sorely wounded animal.

"Good heavens! What will my death-bed be? When I think of leaving you two girls poor and unprotected I go almost mad, and you might save me all this anguish if you wished!"

"At what a cost!"

"Nonsense! He is not a bad man, and think of his wealth!"

This and her mother's other bitter reproaches sank deeply into the girl's heart, for she loved her dearly; and she began to wonder if she ought to sacrifice herself, and in the end she did so.

She consented to marry the Earl. In return for this trifling act he behaved most liberally in the way of settlements, and allowed Mrs. Bishop four hundred a-year.

The wedding was very quiet. On that point Violet was firm as a rock, and the aged bridegroom and his girlish bride set out for their honeymoon journey from the church door—he with a sense of exaltation swelling his wicked old heart; she with every pulse throbbing with repulsion and horror of the man who sat at her side, and a terrible dread of the years that were to come in her bosom.

\* \* \* \* \*

Violet's sense of horror and dread was hardly restrained, for her married life proved anything save a happy one.

Lord Desbro was not a man of much refinement, and little considered the feelings of others especially his wife. His mind was tainted with suspicion, and he often taunted her with having married him for his money; and declared she was waiting eagerly for his death to reap the golden harvest for which she had sold herself into bondage—how weary a one only she and Heaven knew!

These taunts were horrible to the girl. They shocked her sensitive mind, made her shrink more and more from him, and less able to face the weary round of her daily existence, though for ten dreary years she had striven to be a good wife to him, and perform faithfully those duties which fell to her lot, and keep the vows she had made at the altar.

It was hard, uphill work. He grew almost daily weaker, crosser, and more querulous, more suspicious, jealous, and exacting. He wanted her always at his side, and grudged her the few hours she spent driving or walking, while she could not receive a letter, nor write one, without explaining all about it to him.

Altogether her existence was a wretched one, though she had more money to spend than she well knew what to do with, and everything money could procure. Still she often thought with regret of those happy, innocent days at Spar, when she had dreamed away the golden hours under the giant oaks.

Though the Earl possessed three country and one town residence she had really no home; for he was so restless that he hated to stay long in one place. Now he would go to Paris, then to Brussels, then to Nice, then on to Venice, and in his state of health he had to go by easy stages, and the journeys were wearisome things.

At last, during the tenth winter of their married life, the doctors ordered him to Germany to drink the waters, and there he remained until the following April, when, one morning, he suddenly declared he wouldn't stay another day in the "beautify, little hole," as he termed the place where they were staying, but would go to France. Accordingly the maid and valet packed, and they started, going over the frontier, and travelling

incessantly till they came to C——, a bright, pretty town on the sea coast.

Here the severest symptoms of the frightful disorder from which he suffered showed themselves; he became confined to his room. This made him perfectly mad, and for some days he would not let his unfortunate wife leave his room for a minute, and it was only when the doctors insisted on the necessity of her having fresh air and exercise that he consented to her going out for a couple of hours every day.

These hours were very precious to Violet. She had rest, and quiet—freedom from a hateful espionage. She spent them chiefly on the promenade that ran along the top of the cliff. Here there was always a fresh breeze, and the view of the sea was splendid, while the look inland was also pretty, and the sheltered seats inviting; and here she repaired day after day, with a book, and her little dog Toto, the only thing she had to live in her desolate life—that is to say, close at hand—for her mother and sister were away in old England—and the wise people say a woman must love something, and longed away those minutes that seemed to fly all too quickly.

Now C—— was not full. It was too early for the season, and the few visitors who were there, and frequented this favourite promenade, naturally became interested in each other; and many heads were lifted as the Countess of Deabro's slight, graceful figure passed, and many an admiring glance was sent after it. Time had dealt lightly with her, and matured rather than destroyed her beauty. At twenty-seven she was very lovely, and looked quite girlish in her white dress and shady straw hat.

After a while she noticed another visitor who as regularly appeared on the parade every morning as she did. He was a tall man with a heavy, fair moustache, that drooped over and entirely concealed his mouth, and a pair of blue eyes, keen yet kindly. He was extremely neat in his dress, hardly good-looking, but very manly in appearance, and the sort of fellow a woman would not fail to look at twice.

In spite of herself she was interested in him. He seemed to know no one there, and tramped backwards and forwards along the cliff with quarter-deck regularity and precision, alone in his glory. From his look, and the extreme pallor of his face, she judged he had recently recovered from a severe illness, and her interest was further spurred by this supposition. Once or twice, as she watched him, she encountered his glance turned on her, earnest and inquiring, as though he, too, was interested in her, and sought to gain some knowledge of her from her appearance, &c.

She grew to look forward to seeing him every morning almost unconsciously. In a lonely, unhappy life like hers such little things are, as it were, landmarks; and this man interested and attracted her as no other man ever had in all the years of her youth and wifhood.

There was a strange magnetism in his glance which drew her eyes to rest on him, and some occult force seemed to be at work, for she knew, fast before she saw him with bodily eyes, that he was approaching her, and was never surprised to see his tall, upright figure loom dark against the clear sky at the further end of the promenade. He always came at half-past eleven up the slope that led from the Hotel de Paris, where he was staying, and then walked steadily to and fro for a couple of hours, Violet watching him from under the shelter of her long lashes the whole time.

She was unconscious of how deep an interest she took in this stranger until, one morning, being detained by her husband, she did not reach the promenade until past the usual time; and after sitting there some time, and seeing nothing of the unknown, a chill sense of loss and disappointment fell on her, and a few tears rose to her eyes, so keen were her feelings.

This was a shock, a sort of revelation to her, and for a couple of days she studiously avoided any place where she thought she would be likely to meet him; but on the third the longing to meet once more the gaze of those blue eyes became too strong, and an indefinable

something made her turn her steps to the old place.

She had hardly taken her usual seat when she saw the tall well-known figure loom in sight; and as he came nearer a rush of pleasure filled her whole being, and she was conscious of a joy that she had never before experienced, as his glance met and held hers.

It was full of inquiry, and as he passed on he turned, and once more looked at her, and her eyes returned the gaze. For the life of her she could not withdraw them until he turned once more and went on, and she told herself she would not look at him when he passed again; but some fifteen minutes later this unseen power, which she was unable to resist, made her look up, and once more she found him near her, only this time he was not alone. Beside him walked a man taller and broader than himself, with a decidedly military air and bearing, and whom she at once recognised as Colonel Dunning, a friend of the Earl's.

"By Jove, there's Deabro's Countess!" ejaculated the Colonel, and a moment later he was shaking hands with her, and inquiring after her husband.

"Does he derive any benefit from this splendid air?" he inquired.

"Very little," she replied, a blush rising to her pale cheeks, under the fixed gaze of the stranger.

"He is quite an invalid now."

"So I heard from Durrant."

"He has not left his room for nearly a month!"

"Indeed! That looks rather serious."

"I am afraid so. Still, he has a wonderfully strong constitution, and I hope, now the weather is warmer, that he may soon be able to take a drive."

"Hope so, I'm sure! This place does wonders for most invalids. By the way, may I introduce my friend? He is recruiting after a illness."

"I shall be very pleased to know him," murmured Violet, and the next moment Captain Trelawney was presented, and was bowing over her hand.

"I can speak favourably of the invigorating effect of the air," he observed, with a smile that lit up his rather stern face like magic.

"Then you are able to be out for several hours' walking, and taking the full benefit of it!" she said, thinking what a pleasant voice he had, and how different it was from her husband's hoarse accents.

"Yes. I suppose that makes a considerable difference," he allowed, his eyes scanning her lovely face eagerly, and yet with a look of disappointment in them.

"I should rather think it does!" laughed the Colonel. "Here you go tramping backwards and forwards, circulating your blood by exercise, your pulses stirred by the fresh breeze, your eye pleased by lovely scenery; while Deabro, I wager, lies on a couch all day long, and has only the four walls of his room to study—a study, by the way, which any one gets tired of after a while."

"Of course. Illness retards recovery, but then this weather windows can be thrown open, and if an invalid's chair is placed near it, he can see what is going on without much fatigue."

"My husband is so sensitive he cannot bear the windows open sometimes," explained Violet, "and he finds the light trying for his eyes, so the curtains have to be partially drawn, shutting out the view."

"I pity him then, sincerely," returned Trelawney, adding to himself, "I wonder what manner of man this woman's husband is?"

"I should pity anyone who wasn't in full health!" declared Dunning, who had muscles like an Andalusian bull, and never knew what it was to have a day's illness.

"Taen you pity me, I presume!" smiled the Captain.

"I did. But you're getting on all right now, and will soon be able to do your dozen miles easily, and then your score, and so on, till you have reached your old form."

"I hope so," responded Trelawney; but for a moment the keen blue eyes clouded with a wistful look, as though full of regret for past, never to be regained youth and health.

"Oh! you're all right. What do you think, Countess?"

"I think Captain Trelawney still looks delicate," replied Violet, thus appealed to; "though better than he did two or three weeks ago."

"Yes; I feel better," and as he spoke his eyes met hers with a menacing glance, for her speech had been an admission of the interest she took in him, "and I am glad I came here."

She remained silent, while again a flush rose to her cheeks, and she was glad when Colonel Dunning began to make his adieux.

"Tell Deabro I'm here, please, and if he'd like to see me a line to the Hotel de Paris will bring me;" and then both gentlemen doffed their hats and departed, and Violet hurried home, fearing she would be late for luncheon, a meal at which her tyrant always expected her to be present.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"A very lovely woman, isn't she?" said Dunning, as they strode away.

"Very!" agreed his companion, emphatically.

"Quite young, is she not?"

"Under thirty."

"And—and—her husband?" he queried, hesitatingly.

"Is an old beast!" said the Colonel, savagely.

"Ab! Married for money, then!"

"It looks like it. And yet she has always struck me as being the last woman in the world to sell herself, and she doesn't seem to care a bit for money, or what it procures?"

"Her face has nothing ignoble about it—nothing that would suggest that its possessor had sordid or mercenary ideas."

"No. It is of a high type, and I know she does much good amongst the poor wherever she is; while her dress, though always pretty and becoming, is seldom costly, and does not, I'll wager a pony, cost half so much as that of most women of her position."

"Then what did she marry him for?" asked Trelawney, a musing look in his eyes.

"Oh, that I can't tell you, my dear fellow," replied the Colonel. "It is one of those little mysteries of our world which seem to have no explanation."

Trelawney thought of her more than once that day; and the next morning he repaired somewhat earlier than usual to the Promenade, and was considerably disappointed to find Lady Deabro was conspicuous by her absence.

In a fit of pique he turned inland, and went for a long walk. If he had been quite in the possession of his right senses he would have realised how absurd it was of him to feel this great sense of annoyance at the non-appearance of another man's wife—a woman, moreover, whose acquaintance he had only actually made the day before.

But Dick Trelawney was not in a mood to be rational. Violet's lovely, wistful eyes had bewildered and bewitched him, and he longed to look in their soft depths again.

Captain Trelawney was a general favourite. Everyone liked him—everyone agreed in calling him a thoroughly good fellow. He was very popular in his regiment, a great favourite with the ladies, and, if the truth must be told, had received enough flattery from the fair sex to have quite turned a less steady head.

But Dick was sensible, and had not been spoiled by flattery. Still, he felt unaccountably sore that the Countess of Deabro should have deprived him of the sight of her fair face that morning, and told himself savagely that he'd leave the place at the end of next week, and not go near the Promenade for the rest of the time he remained there.

This resolution he kept by steering straight for it, and arriving just as the loungers were strolling home to luncheon. The place was nearly deserted, but his keen eye caught the flutter of a white dress, and the next moment he was hastening after it with all speed.

"I thought you were not coming out this

"Knowing!" he said, a little breathlessly, as he reached Violet's side.

"Did you?" she replied, holding out her hand, a conscious blush rising to her cheek at his words, which implied a greater interest in her movements than was usual for a mere acquaintance to display.

"You were not here at half-past twelve, when I left for a walk to Saint Clouds?"

"No, I only came half-an-hour ago."

"May I ask if it was anything serious that detained you?" he queried, his bright blue eyes searching her face closely.

"Yes. My husband was worse this morning, so I stayed with him," she answered.

"It is very devoted of you. I think most wives would not be so attentive."

"It is my duty," she said, quietly.

"But you should think of yourself. I never see you out in the afternoons!"

"Lord Desbro likes me to read to him then."

"And your evenings are engaged then, too?"

"Not after eight o'clock," she replied, wondering why she answered the questions of this stranger naturally, and as though he had the right to ask them.

"I wonder you do not come out then. The nights are lovely here!"

"I have never thought of doing so," she returned, simply. "After I have dined with Lord Desbro, and said good-night, I go to my room and read."

"And miss all the beauty of these moonlit nights!"

"Yes, and I suppose they are very beautiful!" she said, dreamily, looking out over the sea, on which the sunbeams fell, gemming the rippling waves with a thousand rainbow tints.

"Inexpressibly so. Will you not come out and see for yourself?" and his eyes sought hers half doubtfully, as he said this.

"Perhaps. Some night," she returned evasively, "when the Earl is better," for she felt she couldn't refuse this man's request. He was one it seemed impossible to refuse to obey when his constraining eyes were on her.

"May I call?" he continued. "Dunning is going to your hotel this afternoon, and I thought of accompanying him, unless you would prefer my not doing so!"

"I shall be very glad to see you," she returned frankly, "if you will come, though I fear Lord Desbro will not be well enough to see a visitor."

He mattered something about postponing the pleasure of making his acquaintance, and then said adieu reluctantly.

"What's the matter with the Earl?" asked Trelawney, as late that afternoon he strolled down the Promenade with his friend after paying his visit.

"Chiefly old age. But he is reaping as well a bitter harvest of the sowing of wild oats."

"I see," remarked Dick, with a disgusted expression. "His lordship went the pace when young!"

"Rather. He was one of the fastest and most extravagant men about town even in my young days, and you know he is considerably my senior."

"Yes. He must be a trying companion."

"Slightly. I pity his wife. She begins to show signs now of the weary, heart-sinking years she has spent with him."

"In what way?"

"Her eyes are heavy and dark circled, and her cheeks pale, her whole aspect mournful. She looked very different ten years ago, when she sacrificed herself!"

"On the altar of Mammon!" put in Dick, bitterly.

"It would seem so, yet I cannot believe it of her. She seems high-minded, and still sometimes, I cannot pity her, and feel she almost deserves her fate. Venus to mate with Vulcan for the sake of filthy lucre. If she'd only waited a little she might have mated with a younger man, of the same position and wealth."

"There must have been some very strong reason for her marriage," put in Trelawney, rather eagerly.

"I suppose so," allowed Dunning. "Now I

come to think of it, I did hear something about a sickly mother and baby sister."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Dick, triumphantly. "Her face does not belie her character. It could not!"

"It often does with women," remarked the Colonel, drily. "I wouldn't really trust one of 'em;" and, with this charitable remark, he turned into his hotel, and proceeded to the *table d'hôte*, followed more slowly by his friend.

That first visit was by no means the last Captain Trelawney paid at the *Hôtel Maurice*. It became a usual thing for him to drop in once or twice a week, ostensibly to hear how the Earl was going on, and send news to Dunning, who had left C——; but in reality it was to see Violet, who, when she found her husband was seriously ill, refused to leave the house, and spent most of her time in the sick-room.

"You are ruining your constitution," Dick told her one afternoon as she came down from upstairs to see him, pale, languid, with eyes heavy and dark-rimmed. "You look hardly able to stand."

"I shall be much better after a cup of tea," she replied, with a faint smile, as she seated herself before the little table, on which was set a dainty tea equipage.

"What you want is fresh air and regular exercise," he declared, firmly. "Now, Lady Desbro, I want you to promise me that you will go out every day, if it be only for an hour. Promise." He had risen, and stood beside her, and as she raised her eyes and encountered his a flush suffused her pale cheeks. "Promise!" he reiterated, authoritatively.

"I promise," she replied, in low tones.

"Thanks," he exclaimed, taking her hand, and pressing it gently between his. "You are too unselfish. You must think of yourself. I shall expect to see you on the Promenade tomorrow at twelve."

"I will come."

For the life of her she could not have refused. Wherein his power over her lay it was difficult to say, for he was not an Adonis, nor a genius, nor of great fame or renown, and yet she obeyed his behests unquestioningly, and went with him where he listed.

He opened a new world for her; this man with his keen, kind, blue eyes, and pleasant ways. He lifted her from dull despair, from a weary routine of joyless days to a bliss—a happiness—of which she had never dreamt, and showed her what she had missed; what a union of hearts as well as hands might mean for the young, for those whose blood bounded joyously through their veins, whose pulses throbbed quickly, and beat in response to tender glances and soft words.

She had been content with her life in a dull, uninterested kind of way, or rather utterly resigned to the inevitable—content to live her life in imagination, as it were; to become really interested in the adventures and ultimate fate of the hero and heroine in the novels she read; to be thrilled as she perused the lines that told the story of Elaine, of Gainevere, and Lancelot. But now—now this was all altered. From simply existing she had learnt to live, really and actually—learnt the greatest lesson of life—that is, to a woman—to love!

In Trelawney's society she was apt to forget the miserable circumstances that surrounded her—the shackles that bound her to a bloated *debauché*—the narrow, bare sterility of the thorny path which her shrinking feet had to tread daily. She forgot her sorrow, her despair, all the petty annoyances and troubles that she encountered, fell from her like a cloak, and she became more like the Violet Bishop of ten years before.

Her eyes grew soft and bright, a faint pink flush tinged her cheeks, her step was light and elastic; she hardly seemed to feel or experience any effects from her close attendance on the invalid, and through all this new joy that pervaded her being she never forgot her duty to him, nor slackened her attention to his wants.

Yet, when the dark shadows of evening fell around, and Lord Desbro dropped asleep, it was such a relief, such happiness, to wrap a shawl round her shoulders, and go down to the garden of the hotel, where she knew Dick would be

waiting for her, and wander away with him through the starry gloom by the seashore, listening to stories of his life in India, and his early days, the deep rich tones of his voice blending pleasantly with the roar of the waves as they beat on the shore, tossing their cream-like foam far in on the white sand, leaving trails of red and green seaweed on the wet shore as they retreated.

"What a glorious night!" exclaimed Trelawney, one Jane evening, as they strolled along the cliff tops together.

"Is it not beautiful?" she answered, dreamily, as her eyes, full of a soft and tender light, wandered over the pine-woods and green hills, behind which the sun was sinking to rest, in crimson glory—a glory that shed a rosy glow over all the heavens, and tinged the placid water with its reddish hue.

The sea was like a sheet of glass; there was not a ripple on its quiet surface, and becalmed lay a fleet of fishing boats, their brown sails hanging down idly, while here and there a lateen boat was seen, and one or two white-winged yachts. The white cliffs towered majestically, seeming to rise perpendicularly from the bosom of the ruddy, sun-gemmmed waters; and swooping here and there were grey-winged swallows, skimming over the waves in their search for prey. Save for the gulls there was a curious absence of life and movement.

A stillness reigned everywhere, and Violet and Dick were the only two human beings visible, as they stood there on the summit of the cliff, drinking in the beauty of earth and sky, and watching the stars come out one by one, as the sun sank lower and lower behind the vine-clad hills.

"The world is fair," she went on half wistfully, "but sometimes we hardly seem to notice it."

"Sometimes our troubles and the sordid cares that trouble and oppress us narrow our sense of appreciation, and we cannot do its beauties the justice we should," he returned.

"Perhaps you are right! You must be, for I have never before thought this place or this scene so lovely."

"You have never seen it before with me," he rejoined pointedly, catching at what her words unconsciously implied.

"No, I have not, and—" and then she looked up at him, and something in his eyes made her falter and blush, and look down.

"And it makes a difference who our companion is. Don't you think so, Lady Desbro?"

"Yes," she assented, in low tones.

"If we are with one who cannot appreciate Nature's loveliness, whose mind is always grovelling over the sensualities of life, we naturally lose half our pleasure. True pleasure is to share every pursuit, every joy with a companion whose mind and tastes respond to our own. Oh! what people lose by not understanding each other!" he exclaimed, his eyes seeking her face earnestly.

"Indeed they do," she agreed, a tinge of bitterness in her tones, as she thought of the selfish egotist to whom she was bound by the closest of all ties.

"We make such mistakes in life," he said, gently, drawing her hand through his arm; "and then, when it is too late, regret them, bitterly, unavailingly."

"Ah! yes," she sighed, for at that moment, standing there beside him, his strong hand grasping hers, she realised how gloriously happy, how splendidly free and joyful, hers would be as his wife.

Something of this showed in her face, for he leant over, saying,—

"You have made a mistake;" and then, as she remained silent, he went on,—

"Oh, Violet, if you were only free!"

"I must not listen to you," she said, gently, without rebuking his boldness, for she felt she was being carried away by the force of his passion—influenced by the beauty of the night. But as her eyes met his he saw in their soft depths what her lips dared not utter—what she fain would have concealed—and his heart gave a mighty throb of exultation; but he said no more, only led her back in silence to the hotel, but the

memory of that summer night remained with each of them a bitter-sweet recollection while life lasted.

## CHAPTER V.

A week later Captain Trelawney was telegraphed for on account of the serious illness of his father, and had to hurry off to England, after a brief adieu to the Countess.

He was sorry to go, but she was more sorry to lose the pleasure of his society.

After he left her, life fell back to its old dead level of monotony. When it was night she wished it was day, and when day dawned she longed again for night. She fell back into that Slough of Despond from which Dick Trelawney had rescued her. She turned with sinking heart to her duties, as sick nurse to the selfish old man to whom her mother had sacrificed her. There seemed no light now to dispel the gloom; it was all dark, all night for her.

How she lived through the weary days of that summer she never knew. Her husband was more querulous and exacting than ever. More suspicious, more insulting, and, to add to her misery, her mother was ill, and she could not go to her. She was not free. She could not leave her husband for parent, and her shackles chafed her then as they never had before; and she almost wished that she could die and forget and be forgotten, for there seemed to be no happiness for her in all the wide world.

However, release came to the weary woman when she least expected it.

The Earl had rallied wonderfully, and insisted on getting up and sitting by the window one fine, sunshiny day. She remonstrated, but in vain; the obstinate old man insisted on sitting at the open window; and at last, tired of trying to reason with such obstinacy as he displayed, she rose and left the room, saying she would send his attendant to him. But the servant could not be found, and in less than twenty minutes she returned to her husband's room.

One glance at the still figure by the window, with its ashen face and dropping jaw, was enough. She knew he was dead, that his soul had gone out into the night, unshriven and unblessed, and that she was free.

\* \* \* \* \*

As soon as she could arrange a few matters, Violet set out for England, leaving the valet to bring the earthly remains of Lord Desbro, to be laid in the family vault at his old home, at the end of the week. She hoped to reach Sparr in time to see her mother, before she, too, set out on that journey from which there is no returning.

She travelled across France with all speed, and reached Boulogne early in the afternoon, to find she had just missed the steamer, and must wait till the next day or go that night by the cargo boat.

As she stood debating the question in her own mind a familiar voice accosted her.

"Lady Desbro! Is it really you?"

Looking up, with a start, she saw Dick Trelawney standing before her.

"Yes," she answered, quietly, holding out her hand, though the colour flickered uncertainly in her cheeks and her lids drooped.

"I—I—heard the news yesterday," he began with some hesitation. "So I told Jarvis to pack my bag, went down to Folkestone, and crossed this morning. I was coming on to C——. I thought I might be of some help to you!"

"You are very kind," she said, a little formally.

"Is it more than you expected of me?" he asked quickly, almost reproachfully.

"No. You were always very good to me!" and as she encountered his glance, the blood leapt to her face, and she crimsoned from brow to chin.

"Then let me be good to you now, and take all trouble off your hands! You have only your maid with you, I see," glancing at the woman who discreetly kept in the background, "so tell me what I can do for you!"

"I want to get to England as soon as I can!" she rejoined, eagerly. "My mother is danger-

ously ill, and I so hope to get to Sparr before the end comes. I hear there is a night boat. Can you tell me if I can go by it—if they will take passengers?"

"Oh, yes. They will take passengers in the cargo boats," he replied, a trifle doubtfully, "but there is little or no accommodation for ladies on board. If you don't mind roughing it a bit, and—"

"I don't in the least mind that!" she interrupted, quickly, "and it will save at least a dozen hours. The passenger boat does not go until tomorrow at two. Can you find out the time the other starts to-night?"

"Easily. But first let me take you to an hotel and get you some tea;" and calling a vehicle he put her and the maid in, and getting in himself told the man to drive to the Hotel D'Angleterre, where he installed Lady Desbro in a comfortable room, with the beverage dear to the heart of woman, and then went out to make arrangements for her trip across the Channel.

In about an hour's time he returned, and told her the boat went at midnight, and that he had secured a passage for her, her maid, and himself, and that her baggage was already on board.

She thanked him with a sweet graciousness that made her very fascinating in his eyes, and caused his pulses to throb quicker as he thought of those bright days the future might hold for them both now she was free.

"Will you not come for a stroll, Lady Desbro?" he asked, after a little desultory conversation, and, she assenting, they went out towards the ramparts.

It was a clear, bright autumn day—warm, yet fresh—and the beauty of it seemed to exhilarate both the young people as they mounted slowly up the long flight of steps leading from the Porte des Dunes, and looked over the blue sea, flecked here and there with a white sail, steering for old England.

It was so pleasant within the walls as they walked down the green alleys, the soft breeze blowing by them! They forgot the recent death, the sick woman, the world around them, the other world—composed of their friends and acquaintances in England—forget all, save that they were together!

They did not talk much, but silence sometimes is more eloquent than speech, and the glances that passed between them were fraught with meaning. After a while they sat on a green hillock, and both looked seawards.

"Lady Desbro," he said, at last, breaking the silence.

"Yes, Captain Trelawney?" she replied, looking at him.

"Would you resent it? Would you consider it unwarrantable on my part if I ask you—may I speak now?"

There was no mistaking his meaning. With a rush recollection of the past returned. She remembered the evilly disposed old man, dead so lately; the dreadful days of her married life, and those ones full of such dangerous sweetness which they had spent together all that spring!

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, suddenly, a vision of that ghastly dead face coming between her and the living one beside her. "It is too soon—too soon! I cannot listen!"

"Forgive me," he said, with considerable emotion. "I will not say a word now. Only let me know when I may see you."

"Next year!" she faltered, "at my place—Monk's Horton."

"Will you—write—to me?" he queried, hesitatingly.

"Not till then," she rejoined. "And now let us go back. We must get on board early."

"Yes," he agreed, and, rising, he offered her his arm with extreme courtesy, and they retraced their steps to the hotel.

A little constraint fell between them after this, and though he was most attentive to her during the rest of the journey he uttered no word that could possibly be construed into lover-like, while he did not accompany her further than Folkestone, bidding her adieu there, when he put her in the early morning train, which they found started soon after their arrival.

The journey seemed tedious to Violet after he left her. She missed him sorely—his pleasant cheery ways, his rich voice, the tones of which yet rang in her ears, though she hardly liked to admit it even to herself; it seemed like disloyalty to the dead man.

However, the long journey came to an end at last, and she found herself at the Derbyshire Cottage, which the Earl's money had transformed into such a pleasant place of abode, and in time to receive her dying mother's blessing—a blessing that went far to atone for those dreary years of bondage she had spent for that dear mother's sake.

After the two funerals were over, and matters settled, Violet went to her house at Monk's Horton, taking Poppy with her—Poppy, who had grown into a lovely girl, with a vivid colour, dusky brown hair, and eyes, deep, dark, tender as a gazelle's.

Here in this pleasant part of Kent, with its pastoral slopes, its brown river currents, its rich woodland scenery and fertile pastures, they lived a peaceful life, the sorrow for their loss growing less day by day, and new interests and occupations arising. Still, to one at least the life was just a little monotonous, and there was a longing at her heart which could not be stifled, and that one was Violet.

She had not forgotten, she never could forget, Dick Trelawney. During the ten months spent in the old Kent Manor House, his fair debonair face had never left her thoughts. She was free—free to think of him by day, to dream of him at night.

It was no stain to her womanhood now. She could give this great love that had taken possession of her heart free rein. She need not now check or repress it. She could think again and again of the tender glances he had given her that day when they strolled on the ramparts at Boulogne, could recall each tender cadence of his tone, each loving gesture, and this free, unrestrained thought of her dear one made Violet young and girlish again.

A soft colour beamed in her cheeks, a smile hovered about her lips, her eyes were full of a great, serene gladness. She never doubted but that he would be true; she never thought a younger, fairer woman might turn him from his old allegiance make him unfaithful to her. She believed in and trusted him; and hers was no nature to deal in half-faiths, half-betrays. He was her king, her hero; and she idealised this mere man as only a fond, loving woman can idealise that she adores, with all her heart and soul.

He had done as she bid him, and not come near or visited her; only every three or four weeks a lovely bouquet of flowers would arrive at the Manor House for her, and she knew the bold superscription was his.

At last the long-for letter came, asking permission to come to Monk's Horton and see her; and gladly she wrote, telling him he would be welcome.

The gilded chains of her wedded life had weighed heavily on her, but she was free now—free to welcome him as she would; and with the letter in her hand she went over to the long mirror, and looked at herself, wondering whether he would find her as fair to look on as he had the previous year.

The light fell on her unutterably sweet face and lovely eyes, and with a sigh of content she turned away, kissing the mute words that told he was coming passionately.

He came three days later, fair, debonair, pleasant as usual; and Poppy being present, greeted his hostess only as a friend, while she, feeling a little disappointed at his cool greeting, wrapped herself in a mantle of hauteur, which made him feel that he was being kept at a distance.

Poppy, on the contrary, admired him immensely, and laid herself out to attract him. She wore her prettiest dresses, sang her prettiest songs, smiled her sweetest smiles, and did all she could to subjugate this stern-looking man, who appeared so indifferent to all her wiles and fascinations. But he did not remain indifferent long. Poppy was far too delicate and sweet a piece of feminine loveliness for any man to look coldly on, especially when she was bent on

pleasing him ; and not knowing that her sister looked on him as her lover, she left no stone unturned to win him, while he, on his part, fancying Violet had ceased to care for him, or perhaps had never cared for him at all, let himself be bewitched by the fascinations of this charming little fairy, who so flattered his vanity, and appealed to all that was weakest in his nature.

"I really believe you hate me," she pouted, one night, as they stood in the rose-garden side by side, his fair head towering above her dusky one.

"Hate you ! Why !" he asked in surprise, his eyes resting tenderly on the beautiful blooming face, with the soft red lips that were enough to tempt St. Anthony himself.

"You never keep or care for anything I give you."

"You haven't given me many chances!"

"Where is the rose I gave you this afternoon?" she demanded, impishly, pointing a slender forefinger at his breast.

"It is gone," he admitted, with a comical glance of dismay at his flowerless buttonhole.

"Careless man ! You don't deserve ever to have another," she smiled.

"Forgive me this time," he pleaded, "and give me one of those damask roses that are just like your cheek."

"Flatterer," she murmured, too pleased to refuse his request. "You always have the power to make me do what you wish."

"Always !" he queried, quickly pinching the little hands that were busy fastening the rose in his coat.

"Yes, always !" she assented, raising her lovely eyes to his.

"Then kiss me now !" he whispered, his voice hoarse with passion, for this girl made his pulses throb wildly.

For a moment she hesitated. Then the fresh lips were lifted to his, and he was kissing them madly, holding her tight to his breast, and beseeching her to make him happy, and consent to be his wife ; and before they left the rose garden they were pledged to each other.

"Violet ! I have some news to tell you !" said Poppy the next morning, when the sisters were alone in their boudoir.

"News !" echoed Lady Desbro, looking in surprise at her sister, and seeing her blushing shy face she guessed what it was. "I think I know what it is !"

"Do you !" cried the girl, flinging her arms about the Countess, and hiding her face on her breast.

"Yes ! You want to tell me you have a lover !"

"Oh, Vi ! how did you guess ?"

"From your look, dear ! You seem radiant with happiness !"

"So I am ! So I ought to be ! He is so noble, so good. I am the happiest, luckiest girl in the world !"

"You love this man, then, who seeks to make you his wife ?"

"With my whole heart and soul !" returned the other, fervently ; "and Vi, you will, you must, consent to my marriage with him !"

"Must I, dear ! " with a faint smile. Then all unsuspecting of the faithlessness of that man she worshipped, she asked. "Who is it ? You have not told me his name."

"Captain Trelawney !"

"Oh, Heaven !" whispered Violet; but Poppy did not hear, for she rattled on.

"He says he can't wait, Vi ; that I must marry him before the end of next month. So you must give your consent like an angel, and have the wedding here. Are you angry ? Don't you like him !" cried the girl, for Lady Desbro sat as though turned to marble, and as white and motionless. "Won't you congratulate me ?"

"Of course, darling !" murmured the unhappy woman, falteringly. "May—you—have—every—happiness—in your—married life !"

"Vi ! You look dreadfully ill. What's the matter, dear ! Has my news annoyed you ? Of course—I—I—won't—marry him if—you don't like it."

"Not marry him !" echoed the Countess, col-

lecting herself by a mighty effort. "Of course you must ! I give my consent fully and—freely—and—and—the wedding—shall be here—since you desire it !"

"Oh, Vi ! what a darling you are," kissing her rapturously. "I must go and tell Dick that our happiness is complete," and she ran off trilling an operatic air gaily. But Violet, with her white, set face, and eyes full of dumb anguish, sought the refuge of her own room ; and flinging herself face downwards on the bed, gave way to the agony that consumed her, moaning, "Oh, Heaven ! how shall I—how can I—live my life now !"

She did not appear again that day, pleading a bad headache ; and perhaps Dick guessed why she remained in her room, and he felt rather awkward when he met her the next morning, for conscience was pricking his faithless heart. But his hostess was quite calm and collected, though very white, and congratulated him gracefully, and spoke of his marriage with her sister quite coolly—so great was her pride. She could subdued all signs of the death-blow she had received, and he told himself that she had never cared for him, and that he did well to choose the bright, loving girl who made no secret of her adoration for him.

The wedding preparations were carried out on a lavish scale. Lady Desbro gave her sister everything she could possibly desire, but as she stood by her at the altar, and saw her made the wife of the man she herself loved so madly, she felt that life held nothing more for her, and that her only refuge was the cloister.

In less than a year she said adieu to all things worldly, and became a member of the Poor Clares, the strictest and most rigid set of nuns in England.

Trelawney when he heard of it understood why she renounced the world, and cursed his folly bitterly ; for Poppy as a sweetheart and Poppy as a wife were two different things. Her sweetnes, her airy ways and graces, pallied on him a little. She was no companion for an intellectual man like himself.

She had bewitched him for a while, but he knew the best love of his manhood was given to the pale, sad nun whose daily prayers and penances were offered up to Heaven for him, and his prosperity and happiness ; and he often thought with regret of that sweet summer night when they had wandered in the moonlight, listening to the murmur of the waves, and he had first learnt that she loved him.

But he hid all that from his wife, for he knew that the woman who had hidden her broken heart and ruined life in the calm retreat of a convent trusted him in that, and believed he would be a good husband to the girl-sister whom she loved so dearly. In that at least he was faithful to her, and betrayed not her trust !

[THE END.]

In the early history of the country the natural fall of water furnished almost the only available power, except human muscle. Gradually water power was superseded by steam. It was a great day when the boiler furnished the motive power for turning the great wheels of the mill. The people fancied that they had achieved the summit of success, but after a time steam was too slow ; then came electricity, which at first was a doubtful experiment, and something so fugitive that it was not at all easy to get the handling of it. It appeared to be inadequate and uncontrollable, and there were many doubters as to its practical utility. The problem of handling it at long distances seemed insolvable, and the evolution progressed but slowly. Then some brilliant mind suggested the use of enormous water powers to generate the electric current. Millions of horse power are created by the turning of a great river into the immens turbines at these electric centres. From the great power houses the electric current travels with inconceivable rapidity over miles of space, and furnishes motive power where it would be impossible to obtain it otherwise.

## FALSE PRETENCES.

—10—

It was a bleak, blustering March day, the dry snow blowing hither and yon, the trees bending before the howling blast, and Mrs. Hammond sat before her bright fire, a pretty little elderly lady in a white lace cap, and glistening black silk gown, with a pair of gold eyeglasses in her hand.

Through the partially open door one could catch a glimpse of waving palms and pink-bloomed azaleas in the tiny conservatory, and the whole house bore the stamp of quiet luxury.

"So my half-brother, Clare, is dead !" said Mrs. Hammond, glancing down at a black-edged envelope which lay on her lap.

"Yes, ma'am," said old Harriett, the maid, who was arranging the breakfast tray. "And I declare, ma'am, I had a good cry when I heard it. Such a pretty, bold-faced boy as he used to be ! Do you remember, ma'am, when he painted the poodle's tail orange colour with your beat oil, paints ! And I never could keep a cookoy in the cake-jar, or a jelly cup on the pantry shelf when he was about, bless his heart ! Dead—and left three children ! It don't seem possible."

Mrs. Hammond compressed her lips.

"And they want me to take them," said she. Old Harriett came a little closer.

"And you will, ma'am, won't you ?"

"Certainly I shall not." (Harriett stepped quickly back.) "Harold Clare had his half of the property, and he squandered it. He married a woman that I detest. He had his own way through life. Now I mean to have mine. The eldest girl must be eighteen at least—quite old enough to earn her own living. The two little ones must go into an institution. I wash my hands of them."

And this was Mrs. Hammond's decision, from which no amount of reasoning could move her.

"It's a shame !" cried old Harriett, dissolving into tears, as she remembered the handsome boy who had been at once her torment and her delight in the days of "Auld Lang Syne."

"It is most heartless !" said the rector of the parish.

"It's heathenish !" declared Mr. Sims, the lawyer.

But Mrs. Hammond heeded never a one of them.

"It's my misus, all over," said Harriett. "Mr. Clare offended her mortally when he married the Devonshire young lady, instead of taking to her friend, Bartley, the heiress. And my misus, she's one that never forgets, nor she never forgives !"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Oh, sister, have we got to stay in this dreary place ?"

Little Gertrude Clare clung, with a torrent of tears, to her sister's shabby black gown, while Alice, her twin sister, lay in a disconsolate heap on the floor.

Ethel Clare would have liked to fall down and cry, too, but she knew that she must control herself. She was eighteen, and the twins were only eight.

"Be brave, Gertie," said she. "Don't lie there, Alice. They'll be very kind to you here, and you must learn all you can, so as to be ready, one day, to come and live with me, when I've made my fortune."

"But can't we go with you, sister ?" pleaded little Alice, laying her cheek against the hem of the rusty black gown. "We'll be very good and quiet."

"And we can do lots of things," chirped Gertrude. "Papa never would have gone away and left us in a place like this. You don't love us as papa did."

It was little less than heartbreak for Ethel to tear herself ruthlessly from the embraces and entreaties of the little ones, but with the aid of the kind matron she contrived to do so, and she took the evening train back to London, to try and solve that stern problem of life—earning a living.

Was it luck, or chance, or the guiding finger of Providence that led her to the very registry office whose back windows commanded a view of the crystal dome of Mrs. Hammond's conservatory? —that brought old Harriet thither before her name had been entered half-an-hour in the big ledger on the desk?

"Well, it isn't exactly a maid that I want," said Harriet. "There's maids enough. But it's a sort of companion. My missus, she says she can't stand my stumbling way of reading the paper to her any longer, and she says the lace I mend ain't fit for any one to wear; and she says I must bring someone back that can read and play the piano, and write notes and help the time to go by. The wages aren't much, but it'll be a first class home for any one who is lucky enough to suit."

"There's a young person just come that wanted some such place," said the superintendent, referring to the book.

And Ethel was brought in, her colour changing and her heart beating.

"Heaven bless us!" croaked Harriet opening her bleared eyes. "Miss—Clare did you say? It's a name my missus ain't partial to. Ain't you no middle name? Well, then, we'll call you Miss Fawcett. My missus, she's as full of whims as an egg is of meat. But you'll suit her—yes, I think you'll suit her. She likes young people and pretty people, and her heart isn't bad when you get at it. Look here! you're Harold Clare's daughter, ain't you, from Dalesford, in Yorkshire? My pretty dear, I've held your father on my knee many a time, when he wasn't as high as a grasshopper. But Mrs. Hammond musn't know—no, I'll win her over in spite of herself—see if we don't!"

And Ethel, who had a vein of romance in her girlish heart, entered willingly into the conspiracy.

In one thing Harriet was right. Mrs. Hammond was pleased with her new companion. Miss Fawcett "suited her" in all respects.

"And the marvel of it," said she, "laughingly, 'is that old Harriet isn't jealous. I never had a companion in the house before, but that she was half-mad with jealousy. How have you won her heart, my dear!'

And Ethel drooped her head and said that she did not know.

"Harriet, look here," said Mrs. Hammond one day to her old servant, "I want to talk to you. Where is Miss Fawcett? Watering the azaleas? Well, shut the door, she mustn't hear."

"Ma'am," gasped Harriet, "you're never going to send her away!"

"No, you old goose! Send her away, indeed! Whatever should I do without her? No, it's quite another thing I'm thinking of. This old house is dull, isn't it?"

"Well, ma'am, it ain't exactly gay."

"And it's twice too big for us, you know."

"It is a pretty roomy place, ma'am."

Miss Fawcett was crying this morning when I came into the room suddenly," said Mrs. Hammond, in a mysterious whisper, "and I never rested until I coaxed the secret out of her." (Harriet started guiltily.) "Think, Harriet! she has two little twin sisters in an orphanage in Hertfordshire!" (Harriet recovered herself again.) "Now, Harriet, wouldn't it be a delightful surprise for you to go to the place and get those dear little girls, and bring them here?"

"Lawk, ma'am!" gasped Harriet.

"The rector is always preaching to me that I ought to adopt a homeless child," added Mrs. Hammond, "and here's two of 'em. Miss Fawcett showed me their photographs—real golden-haired little beauties! I know I'm a queer, cranky old woman, but I always was fond of children. Here's the name of the street, Harriet. I'll let Miss Fawcett suppose you've gone to visit your widowed sister, and you shall bring 'em here. What a surprise it will be! How I shall enjoy it!"

"Heaven be good to me!" thought Harriet, "but I'm gettin' into a reg'lar Guy Fawkes tangle of plots and mysteries. However, I don't see no way but to go ahead and do what my missus says. Here goes!"

And one long June day, when Miss Fawcett came home from doing errands for Mrs. Hammond, with a bunch of long-stemmed roses in her hand, she found Gertrude and Alice in the boudoir, playing with an old-fashioned wax doll and a box of Chinese puzzles, which Mrs. Hammond had rummaged out of the store-closet for their benefit.

"We're adopted, sister!" they cried, gleefully. "The pretty old lady in the white lace cap has adopted us. And, oh, isn't it a pretty place! And have you seen the tall palm tree, and the lemon tree with real lemons on it? It's like coming to Heaven, only we haven't had to die first."

"What funny things children do, to be sure!" said Mrs. Hammond, furtively wiping her spectacles-glasses; but she was not displeased. "Well, Miss Fawcett, how do you like my surprise? My! don't begin to cry. I hate tears," with the crystal drops coursing rapidly down her own withered cheeks. "And you needn't thank me; I won't be thanked."

The children skipped off to play with the white cat, whose silver-bellied collar was a perpetual challenge to them.

Ethel fell on her knees and buried her face in Mrs. Hammond's lap.

"I love you!" she sobbed. "Oh, how I love you!"

"Look here!" said old Harriet, straightening herself up. "I can't stand no more of this. I must confess, or burst!"

"What!" ejaculated Mrs. Hammond. "I'm a hypocrite and a deceiver," said Harriet. "And a liar—that's what I am!"

"Is the woman crazy?" said her mistress.

"And I've cheated you all along!" persisted Harriet, raising her voice to a perfect howl. "Yes, discharge me! I don't deserve no character! Turn me out of doors! For Miss Fawcett ain't Miss Fawcett at all, but your own blessed niece, Mr. Harold's daughter, and the blessed children are your own flesh and blood. Do as you please with me, but don't turn them out! For it's my doings, every bit of it."

And Harriet ended with a piteous wail that brought Alice and Gertrude and the white kitten to the rescue.

"What is the matter with the kind old woman with the crooked nose?" said Gertrude. "Please don't scold her, Mrs. Hammond!"

"Say 'Aunt' Hammond, my dear," said the old lady. "No, I won't scold her. I—I begin to see through the mystery now. I planned a surprise for you, child," to Ethel. "And I am still more surprised myself. But I'm not angry—don't think it. I do believe you all love me," as Ethel covered her white, withered hand with kisses, and the children clung about her neck, "and so we'll all thank Heaven for its mercies! Harriet, don't stand staring there, but go and open a jar of greengages plums for lunch, and tell the cook to send up chicken croquettes and green peas, and plenty of sponge cakes. Children like sweet things!"

So she accepted the situation with admirable philosophy, and old Harriet trotted away muttering to herself,—

"I ought to be down in the lowest depths of penitence, after all the fibs I've told, and the wicked deceipts I've practised; but, somehow, I can't help being the happiest old woman in the world!"

[THE END.]

## HAD WE NEVER LOVED SO BLINDLY

—30—

### CHAPTER I.

THERE never had been such excitement in Silcock before. Mrs. Winder, the Rector's wife, ordered a new bonnet from Oxford-street, instead of being content with Mrs. Higgins, of High-street, Winchester, who usually was honoured with her custom, and the extravagance of the young ladies of the neighbourhood far outdid the expectations or the wishes of their elders.

Even Mr. Willoughby, the solicitor to all the great families within a circle of sixteen miles, bought a new hat, and he was not used to having his mental equilibrium upset by every wind that blew.

His daughters, Emily and Jane, spent hours in consulting whether blue or pink were most becoming, and finally decided on the latter, because Alice Winder was sure to try and look like a forget-me-not.

No one asked what Flora Trevanion was going to wear, for the girls were jealous of her, and their mother didn't care. No one did care, except poor Eustace, her invalid brother, and he not much, as he thought she looked beautiful in anything.

She was hurt and vexed with herself for being hurt at their want of interest, and determined to go away and hide in the woods of Greylands, till the chatter had ceased about frills and furbelows.

As she never went anywhere without her second self, her brother, she ran down the garden to enlist the services of George, the under-gardener, to pull his chair. George was very busy digging up some potatoes, but he could never say "no" to Miss Flora. So he dug away with immense energy, till large beads of perspiration ran down his face, and a sufficient number of potatoes were heaped up in a large basket. Then he carried them into the house, and ran off to tidy himself up, and put on another coat.

It was not long before the wheels of the carriage grated on the gravel, and Flora flew off eagerly to summon her brother. He came downstairs leaning on her arm, and they made a pretty picture as they stood together for a minute under the rose-crowned porch.

He was tall and slight, with a patient high-bred face and blue eyes, which would have been more prone to laugh than to weep, if it had not been for the accident at Eton, which had sent him home a cripple, never to play another game of cricket on "the green playing fields," and hear the eager rounds of applause as his bat sent the ball for "a fiver," and the score leapt up towards the hundred.

It seemed to the boy, full of life and high spirit, far better to die than to be condemned to be a useless log for the rest of his existence; but his sister seemed about to break her heart when ever he said so. So he tried to bear his burden with what patience he could. He had a tutor, so that he might not feel a dunce amongst his fellow-men when he should be able to go amongst them; but it was very difficult to work hard when there was no chance of play as a refreshment to mind and body, and every now and then he felt inclined to give it all up as a bad job.

Then his father died, and his mother followed him, and dark days came upon Trevanion Hall. The property was heavily mortgaged, and had to be let to the first tenant that offered, whilst only a paltry sum could be allowed for the maintenance of the orphans.

Mr. Willoughby, who was an old friend of the squire's, found himself appointed guardian to the two children, and at once offered them a home under his own roof.

The trustees, for the sake of the independence of the Trevanions, insisted upon paying him a fixed annual sum, so that they should be no expense to him, whilst a very small amount was secured to the brother and sister as pocket-money.

Mr. Willoughby was pleased at the importance it would give her in the eyes of the neighbourhood to have Squire Trevanion's son and

PHYSIOLOGISTS claim that the growth from infancy to old age is a gradual process of ossification, and that the stiffness of age is caused by the deposits of calcareous matter or earthy salts. Therefore a diet containing a large proportion of these salts, food rich in nitrogen, such as the cereals, beans, peas, and meat, increases the natural tendency to ossification. For this reason a diet made up largely of fruit, which contains a minimum amount of this calcareous matter, is scientifically best adapted to persons in advancing years.

daughter to live with her, and immediately formed a plan for the marriage of her Emily to the young heir. But her dreams were roughly dispelled when she found that he was a hopeless cripple and at present well-nigh penniless; and she was further disgusted to perceive that the other young stranger was a beauty, who would be sure to cut out her daughters whenever they had a chance.

Flora was sixteen when she first arrived; and during the two years that followed, made a conquest of every creature that came within sight of her pretty face. Her favourite was Frank Rivers, who paid flying visits every now and then to his home from Sandhurst, and always found time to slip down to the Willoughbys for a game of tennis, or a chat over the fire.

Emily, who chose to consider him as her own property, was at first much put out by the friendly alliance between the two; but now she had set her heart on higher game, as she planned her bewitching costume of pink canvas, trimmed with coffee-coloured lace.

All the excitement in the neighbourhood was due to the expected arrival of Sir Basil Fane, who had succeeded to the Abbey of Greylands, and all its lovely meads and forests, on the death of his cousin, Sir Lucius.

Sir Lucius, a selfish, dissipated soul, died at Monte Carlo, shot at by an unknown hand, and Basil, the hardworking barrister, who had found a scanty subsistence on his most uncertain fees, awoke one morning to find himself the owner of the finest estate in Hampshire, with a rent-roll of fabulous thousands.

It did not seem such a pleasant surprise to him as his friends expected, and he was in no hurry to take possession of his splendid inheritance.

He wrote his orders to his housekeeper, Mrs. Madden, and to Mr. Mitchell, his steward; but whilst everyone was longing to see him, he never came near the place for five years.

This was the reason why there was so much excitement when at last it was announced that the baronet was coming down.

Public interest, which had flagged for want of something to support it, woke into new life, and no one could talk of anything else but the first of June, when Sir Basil Fane was to take possession of the halls of his ancestors, and make acquaintance with his tenants and neighbours in general, including the county families and the lesser gentry, in one wide sweep.

Two people did not trouble themselves about him, except to wonder vaguely every now and then if he would let them wander at large through his delightful woods, as had been their constant custom since their arrival at Greylands.

They thought he would make no difference to their lives, forgetting that in a quiet stream one pebble may make a wonderful splash and disturbance, whilst it would be lost in the noise of a turbulent river.

Flora had chosen a charming nook on the bank of a small pool edged with yellow irises. George wheeled the chair under a sheltering willow, and then ran back to The Firs to finish his work in the garden. He was not to come back till half-past six, so during three hours the brother and sister had had the silence and the sweetness of the woods to themselves. Eustace tried to study a Greek book which he had brought with him, whilst Flora was roaming here and there in search of wild flowers.

"I can't see a single blue-bell," said Eustace, looking round discontentedly. "I thought the wood was full of them."

Flora knew they were his favourite flowers, and determined to find some if possible, so hurried away to a distant part, calling out that she would be back soon.

The sweet, bell-like voice rang through the silence, and startled a dreamer from his reverie. He had been thinking so deeply that he had quite forgotten where he was till the words "I'll be back soon, darling" roused him to full consciousness. Who would be back soon, and who was the darling?

A cynical smile curled his lip, and made his hideous, resolute face look almost unpleasing. He remembered having "a darling"

once, but he had been obliged to do without her, as without most of the things that he cared for. Would he care again? "No," he told himself with quick decision. He had passed the calf-like part of existence, and now he had something more serious to think of than love-sick nonsense and all that trash.

There was a rustle in the bushes. He turned his head in time to see a girl run just as if it were December instead of May helter-skelter through the brambles, much as if she were running a race with a hare. Her dress caught on a bramble; she stooped to unloose it, and as she pulled at it with small hands that tugged with all their might, he caught a glimpse of the pretty animated face, and wondered whose it could be.

The wonder did not last long. She now extricated her dress, and ran away without having an idea that she was watched, and he relapsed into a mass of thoughts more tangled than the briars on either side.

Eustace Trevanion thought the Greek book drier than ever, and began to get impatient for Flora's return. He closed the volume and looked with eager eyes at the yellow irises, till he fancied he could manage to get her a bunch of them before she came back, and he got slowly out of the chair on to the smooth grass. When there he straightened himself, and leant on his stick for a few minutes in order to recover from the exertion.

A slight pink tinged his thin cheeks and his eyes brightened.

To stoop was difficult, but it was such a pleasure to do something for himself unassisted, that he was quite glad that Flora was not there to help him. He went close to the water's edge, and watched the lights and shadows thrown by sunbeams through the branches, the tadpoles jumping here and there, the small fry always darting after the larger, a large frog with its mouth wide open waiting for the unwary fly. Everything was full of life and energy except himself.

He was the only useless thing on the margin of that calm, quiet pool, and his heart was heavy with the restlessness of youth for which there was no outlet.

He bent forward and caught hold of one iris with the tips of his fingers, and having managed to sever the stalk threw it in triumph on the bank.

But the finest of all was further off—almost out of reach, and yet not quite. He had made up his mind to get it, and set his teeth with a resolution worthy of a more important object. He raised his stick and tried to catch the stem in the crook of the handle, but alas! he had forgotten his own incapacity in the eagerness of possession, and, unaccustomed to exertion without support, fell forwards into the water with a splash that sent the bubbles up to the sky, and a cry that startled the birds from their resting-place.

Flora, gathering bluebells in a distant hollow with a pleasant smile on her lips and her pretty head full of youthful fancies, heard the cry, with the sharp ears of affection.

Down went the bluebells in a heap on the withered leaves, as she sped like a lapwing through bush and brier, her face white as her own dress, her breath failing for very fear.

Panting as she reached the pool, one glance at the empty chair, another at the broken flags, and without a thought for her own safety she plunged in.

"Eustace!" came like a wall from her lips, as with hands outstretched towards a sleeve of grey cloth, just visible amongst the leaves, she sank gasping, choking, suffocating in the bottomless water.

She had no time but for one thought—they must die together—and they were clinging tight in each other's arms, when the stranger who had hurried to the spot, managed by an Herculean effort to drag them both to the surface and—after a pause—to the bank.

He was a hardened man of the world—unused to emotion of any sort; but a sob rose in his throat as he looked down on the brother and sister locked in that embrace of love!

Was there anyone on earth who would have faced death rather than let him die alone? His desolate heart answered back, "Not a soul!"

## CHAPTER II.

It was not long before Flora opened her eyes, and looked straight up into the handsome face, which was bending so earnestly over her own.

"Did you save us?" she asked, wondering, whilst the water dripped from her soft, brown hair, and every inch of clothing that she had about her.

"I pulled you out," he said, gravely; "but if I had not been there you would have drowned yourself. What right had you to do it?"

"I couldn't think of right or wrong when Eustace was in the water. Do you think he's hurt?" pushing back his bright hair with tender fingers.

"No. I had better lift him into the chair, and then we must get him up to the house as quickly as we can. I suppose Mrs. Madden can rig up a bed!"

"But can't we go home?" in dismay, as fear of Mrs. Willoughby's displeasure passed through her mind.

It was not the way of the solicitor's household to be irregular about coming in or going out, and she was conscious of the astonishment their absence would excite.

"I don't know where your home is, but surely the Abbey is nearer!" as he lifted the slight form in his arms, and drawing a deep breath, placed Eustace Trevanion in the chair.

"We live at The Firs with Mrs. Willoughby."

"I know the name of Willoughby, but not the position of the house. Is it far?"

"Yes, close to the village."

"And we are close to the Abbey. There can't be any doubt."

He took hold of the chair, and wheeled it gently over the grass, whilst Flora walked by the side, casting terrified glances at the white face which showed but little sign of life. If he had offered to take her to Timbuctoo, it is probable that she would have made no opposition. Eustace was her only thought, and she walked with clasped hands, and eyes wide open with fear, perfectly unconscious of her own dripping state, though her garments were clinging to her legs.

They stopped, and she found they had reached the back door.

"I brought him round this way because there are no steps," explained the stranger, adding to a maid who came forward, dropped a curtsey, and stared, "Send Mrs. Madden at once."

Flora knelt down on the gravel, forgetful of all her surroundings, her wistful eyes fixed in passionate entreaty on her brother's face, his cold hands pressed to her lips.

The man who watched her thought he had never seen anything so lovely before, and thought the boy a happy fellow to have excited such devotion. Could he ever hope that a woman's eyes would look into his with such an expression as that; and if they did would his heart ever be able to answer?

"Miss Willoughby," he said, in his clear, strong voice, which he made as soft as he could, "tell me the doctor's name, and I'll send a messenger for him and your father."

She did not turn her eyes from her brother, only gave a little bend of her head and thanked him, mentioning Dr. Stevens. Then with the help of one or two men servants, he carried Eustace Trevanion along a flagged passage into the library, where he was laid upon a sofa which the housekeeper had already covered with blankets. Brandy was poured freely down the boy's throat, and it was not long before he opened his eyes, and looked fondly up into his sister's face.

"Why Flo, what's up? You've been crying."

Then she burst out sobbing, and hid her face on his chest; and Mrs. Madden, looking on, found it necessary to wipe her eyes.

The stranger drew her on one side, and spoke to her earnestly for a few minutes. Then he pulled out his watch and came back to the sofa.

"I am obliged to be off now, but I hope you will make any use you please of this house and consider yourself as Sir Basil's guest until your brother is quite recovered."

Flora raised her head and tried to collect her thoughts.

"Sir Basil's guests!"

"Yes. I have authority to speak in his name. Your brother must be put to bed at once to prevent his catching cold, and you won't want to leave him," with a slight smile, which softened his face wonderfully.

"No, I couldn't leave him," holding his hand in a close clasp, as if to prevent all chance of a parting.

"Then that is settled. You will stay here and make yourselves quite at home! Mrs. Madden will take the greatest care of you, and for your brother's sake you are bound not to stir till he has recovered."

"But Sir Basil will think it so cool," detaching her mind for a moment from her great anxiety, and remembering the conveniences.

"I assure you that he's not that sort of man. He would only regret as I do, that he is obliged to be absent, and leaves Mrs. Madden to entertain his guests. I must be off, or I shall lose my train, but promise me that you will not run away before I return!" a very earnest look in the dark eyes, which brought a shade of pink to the girl's cheeks.

"That must depend on Mrs. Willoughby."

"It must depend on nothing but your own will," in a quick, imperative manner. "Mr. Willoughby," with a glance at the boy whom he had saved, "the sooner you are in bed the better."

Then he bowed low, and followed by the house-keeper, left the room.

"Pray don't let him take me for a Willoughby!" said Eustace, faintly.

Even in his weakness it angered him that a Trevanion could possibly be taken for a son of the country solicitor.

Flo smiled. She did not care what nonsense he talked, so long as she was able to hear his dear voice again. Her own wet clothes made her shiver, but she did not think of the discomfort, or the chance of worse evils to herself, till Eustace was led away from her into a bedroom on the ground floor, and Mrs. Madden, a kindly-hearted, motherly sort of woman, carried her off upstairs.

Mr. Willoughby, a pleasant-looking man about medium height, with greyish, mutton-chop whiskers, sunburnt face, and merry, dark eyes, arrived on his cob, before the doctor.

When Flora Trevanion ran down the broad flight of stairs to meet him, he took her in his arms and kissed her tenderly.

"Child, what a fright you've given me! No bones broken?" plucking her arms, and looking her over from head to foot with eager care.

"And Eustace, not quite done for!"

"No, thank Heaven! come and see him!" putting her arm through his, and leading him down the passage.

She was very fond of her guardian, and Mrs. Willoughby, when out of temper, sometimes declared that he was fonder of his old friend's child than of his "own flesh and blood."

Certainly his "own flesh and blood" didn't seem to understand him so well, and it was to Flora he turned for sympathy in any moment of trouble, because she was not always occupied with frills and furbelows.

He could not help laughing at the queer figure she cut in the housekeeper's best black silk, which fitted her slight figure like a sack; but his face grew grave as he went up to Eustace's bedside, knowing that what would seem a trifling accident to some people might do the delicate boy an irreparable injury.

He waited till Dr. Stevens came, and having heard that perfect quiet for a few days was the only thing necessary to make Eustace as well as usual, and that beyond a few bruises he had received no actual hurt, he got on his cob again and prepared to ride home.

"Very good of Sir Basil to let you stay, Poppet;" that was Mr. Willoughby's pet name for his ward, though where he had got it from nobody knew.

"Not Sir Basil, but his friend."

"So it was wasn't the man himself? I won't tell my wife. You can't leave the boy, but of course you'll get home before the first."

"Of course. Fancy staying with Sir Basil!"

"The girls would say you had taken a mean advantage. Take care of yourself, I daresay the whole family will come up and see you tomorrow. If you feel lonely—"

"But I shan't with Eustace."

"I am glad that friend has gone, or you would be flirting with him."

"Not I; but I love him already, you know," her eyes softening, "because he saved my dear old boy."

"I owe him something for saving Poppet," his hand placed caressingly on her shoulder.

"Come back as soon as you can, child, for the house seems dull without you."

### CHAPTER III.

EUSTACE TREVANION's delicate health had received a severe shock from his sudden immersion in the water, and he did not recover as soon as the Willoughbys expected.

Emily and Jane kept coming up to the Abbey with the most affectionate inquiries, because they liked to have the run of the grand old house, and the former, who was very ambitious, had already made a castle in the air, with herself playing the principal part as Lady Fane.

Flora must be got away before the first, or else neither of the sisters would have a chance; for they had the sense to perceive that her beauty might even outweigh the splendour of their pink dresses, in spite of the yards and yards of coffee-coloured lace.

They had just gone away, two buxom country lasses, scudding like rabbits over the fields, and Flora had半身 on to her favourite seat, a hollow scooped out of an ivied stump, just on the borders of the shrubbery, where there was a lovely view over the valley to the wooded hills beyond.

Her young head was full of dreams, like Emily's; but Eustace was her hero, not a lover. He was to get quite strong. It was too late for him to be a soldier, like Frank Rivers, but there were plenty of useful things to be done in life besides soldiering, and they were sure to be happy if they lived together in their old home, where the name of Trevanion was loved by all.

Here they were of no particular account, like the Jews in a strange land. Out there Eustace would be like a king, and she would be happy, whether his queen or his slave.

"Dreaming!"

She looked up with lovely startled eyes, and saw the dark, good-looking face of the man who had saved her and her brother from death among the yellow irises.

He smiled, and threw a bunch of blue-bells into her lap.

"You were gathering these when I first saw you."

She took them up in her hand, whilst the colour flew to her cheeks and the tears to her eyes.

"I am ashamed to see you," she said, in a low voice, as she stood up. "To think I never thanked you for saving my brother! You must have thought me the most ungrateful wretch that ever lived."

He took the small white hand which she held out to him, and kept it in a close grasp.

"Shall I ever cease to thank Providence for giving me a chance of saving you?"

"But that didn't matter half so much, with all sincerity. Eustace is the last of the Trevanions."

He looked surprised.

"And I am the last of a very old race, and nobody would be a bit the worse if I were drowned to-morrow."

"I should," promptly, with eager eyes and

tremulous lips. "Don't I thank Heaven night and day for the very fact of your existence!"

"Hush! I don't deserve this," a wave of intense emotion passing over his face.

"Not deserve it! No man could have done more. Oh! as long as I live I shall bless your name."

He looked down at her with a strange expression of mingled pain and pleasure, as if the darkest thoughts were passing through his mind, which her words could scarcely brighten. He laid his hand on her shoulder, and looked into her eyes, as if he would search her soul.

Her eyes met his with the fearlessness of youth, and a slow smile came about his mouth.

"If you think you owe me anything—you look loyal and true—promise to stand by me and be my friend."

And she promised, in the fervour of her gratitude, saying, softly and shyly,—

"Till death!" not knowing what the promise would cost her, nor guessing how deep a shadow it would cast over her life.

He asked her to spare him a few minutes, so she sat down again on her old seat, unconscious of any danger; and he flung himself on the grass at her feet.

Eustace was asleep. It was the idle time of the day, and there was nothing to tell her that she had better fly.

The stranger talked to her in that low, rich voice which would be a pleasant sound in ears so long as gratitude for service rendered was stronger than any other feeling; but he spoke to her more of her own life than his own, listening to all she said with such deep interest that she was led on to confide to him all her troubles. And all the while she was talking his eyes travelled slowly from the beautiful ever-changing face to the rounded lines of her supple figure, taking in the beauty, the sweetness, and the grace, with all the enthusiasm of a man who was an artist by nature, and who had cut himself off from feminine society for five long years.

They dined together in the octagon room, with the dark oak paneling, the table richly laden with fine old silver and the finest products of the hothouse.

When the moonlight was falling on flowers and trees, making the rich woodland look like a silver fairyland of dreams, they walked side by side on the terrace.

He prayed so earnestly that she would stay with him whilst he smoked one cigar, "Your brother can have you for hour after hour, but I am going off by the eleven o'clock train," that she could not slip away without seeming ungracious.

She had an uneasy consciousness that Mrs. Willoughby would object; but she thought that her objections would be unnecessary, and she would rather offend her guardian's fancy wife than the man to whom she owed her brother's life.

They leaned over the balustrade together, the scent of his cigar mingling with the perfume of the roses she wore on her breast, and for the first time for many years Eustace Trevanion was forgotten by his sister.

"I came to-day because you were here. I stayed because I could not leave you. I am only going to-night for fear of frightening you away," said the man by her side, in the voice that was always soft when he spoke to her. "I thought you were a Willoughby, but I know now that you are a Trevanion—a family as old as the hills. When we meet again you won't class me with the common herd! You won't keep me at a distance and make me call you Miss Trevanion. You will be 'Flora' to me—your special friend."

There was a passionate eagerness in his voice that made her heart beat fast and the blood rush to her face. Her long lashes swept her cheeks as she said simply,—

"Don't I owe you everything? Call me whatever you like."

"Thanks."

Then there was a pause. She could not tell what was passing through his mind as he turned his face towards hers, and the cigar dropped unheeded to the path below. But a sudden shyness crept over her, partly on account of the silence, and she broke it hastily,—



HER DRESS CAUGHT ON A BRAMBLE, AND SHE STOOPED TO UNLOOSE IT.

"You've never told me your own name. It must be a very ugly one."

"Basil," he said, with a certain reluctance. She stepped back in surprise.

"Not Sir Basil Fane!"

"The same—at your service," with downcast eyes, more as if he were confessing a sin than acknowledging an honourable name.

"And I am here with you!" in overpowering confusion. "Oh! why did you come? I must go home at once!"

"Why?" drawing himself up, and speaking with forced coldness.

"Because—because—you know I was to go home before you came," clasping her hands, and looking very like a child expecting a scolding.

He came a little nearer, a delicious smile softening the curves of his lips.

"Am I so very dangerous?"

"Not at all," throwing back her head, and breaking the spell which he seemed to have cast over her. "Eustace is wanting me. I must go!"

She tried to run away, but he caught hold of her hands and held them fast.

"Not till you have said good-bye. Child," looking at her innocent face, with a strange yearning in his passionate eyes, "promise to wait for me till I come back."

She shook her head, though a smile hovered about her lip.

"I will always do whatever you wish of me, of course, but Mrs. Willoughby wouldn't let me stay."

"Bother Mrs. Willoughby!"

Then a sudden madness came over him, and his blood seemed to leap in his veins. He bent his head, and his voice was low and soft.

"If I ask for a kiss will you give it me?"

She tried to snatch her hands away, whilst her face became one flame. There was no time for denial or hesitation; his moustaches touched her cheek, and the next moment she was flying to the house like a frightened bird to its nest.

"What a long time that tiresome fellow has kept you," grumbled Eustace, as a few minutes later, his penitent sister asked in a meek voice "if he would like to be read to!" "No, I've had enough of reading, I want to talk. You know, Fio, it isn't proper for you to be alone with a man when we don't even know his name."

"Have you forgotten that I shouldn't have you, darling, if it hadn't been for him?" stooping down and kissing the fair forehead. "When I think of what I owe him, there's nothing I wouldn't do for Sir Basil Fane."

"Fane! Do you mean it's Fane?" staring up at her in astonishment.

"Yes, he told me so to-night. We were blind not to guess it before."

"I never troubled my mind about him," with lofty unconcern. "We must bundle out of this to-morrow."

"You are not to go till you are quite well, but I must leave before the first," busying herself in tidying up the room.

He broke out with a mischievous laugh. "Fio, I'm ashamed of you. You've been stealing a march on the 'twins.'"

The thirty-first of May brought a letter from Sir Basil Fane to Eustace Trevanion, to tell him that the writer would be bitterly offended if he decamped instead of waiting to welcome him, and begging him to use his influence with his sister not to desert her charge.

Mrs. Willoughby at once decided that Eustace might stay, but that Fio must come home. So the latter parted from her brother reluctantly, though eager to avoid a meeting with his host.

The preparations for the *réve* were proceeding with celerity. Triumphal arches were in course of being erected down the avenue, and there was a vast amount of hammering going on. Flags were being rigged up in every tree, and cart-loads of plants were made into a bank of bright blossoms on either side of the handsome gateway.

By two o'clock the next day everything was completed, both workmen and lookers-on had gone home to have their dinner, and the road was deserted.

Profiting by this quiet interval, a man stepped up to the right-hand gate-post, with a paint-pot in his hand and a roll of yellow paper under his arm. He unrolled the paper with the utmost haste, daubed the back of it with an ample supply of paste, fixed it to the gate-post, smoothed it down with the palms of his hands, gave it a nod of approval and departed.

#### MURDER! MURDER!

"ONE THOUSAND POUNDS REWARD!—Whereas Sir Lucius Fane, Bart., of the parish of Greylands, in the County of Hampshire, was cruelly murdered on the 10th of February, 1880. The above sum will be paid to any person who gives information which will lead to the apprehension of the murderer.—(Signed) GEORGE HENDERSON, Superintendent of Police."

The bright yellow paper flaunted in the sun, in the midst of the joyous preparations, telling its message of woe and crime. The deed which had made Sir Basil the involuntary master of Greylands had been almost forgotten. Why rake up the remembrance to greet him on the threshold of his new home?

(To be continued.)

On the battlefield nowadays it is only when men come to the bayonet charge that they fight shoulder to shoulder. In order to minimize the risk of their being hit the men fighting at other times kept a distance apart. Thus the bullet that just misses one man does not strike his neighbour. The order being so open, and the men thus spread out over a considerable extent of ground, it sometimes happens, especially when—as in the present war—many officers are killed, that a number of men find themselves without any commander.



"WOULD YOU LIKE A COPY OF THE ENTRY?" THE RECTOR SAID.

## CAN YOU BLAME HER?

—10—

## CHAPTER IV.—(continued.)

"ARNOLD," said Mrs. Grant, in blithe tones, "this is Sir John's fiancée, and she has come to invite us to the wedding."

"Yes," said the girl, gently, "I am Hyacinth Dane."

"Hyacinth Dane!" in a voice of bewilderment.

"Arnold," exclaimed his wife, in reproachful tones, "what can you mean by repeating Lady Hyacinth's words, and why are you staring at me like that?"

"I beg your pardon, Katy, and yours, Lady Hyacinth; I was only astonished."

"At Sir John's choice!" said Hyacinth, archly.

"No; at the sight of you. Do you know we have met once before?"

"When?"

"I was with Sir John on the dull winter's afternoon when he found you in the snow. I shall never forget his face as he stopped his horse and took you in his arms. He knew nothing then as to who you were. We could not even tell if you were alive or dead. John carried you, a shapeless heap of snow, as it seemed to me, up the avenue—and now you are to be his wife!"

"It sounds like a romance," said Katy, with glistening eyes; "it must have been love at first sight."

"I think it was."

Arnold looked at her with a strange, troubled gaze.

"You will think me presumptuous, Lady Hyacinth, but I believe we have met before."

"You can hardly call it a meeting," said Hyacinth, "since I was unconscious."

"I did not mean last winter, but before. Do you know there is a face in my sketch-book of which yours might be the original. All your features seem familiar to me."

"Perhaps I resemble one of your fancy sketches," she suggested, smiling; and then, with renewed persuasions to the young couple to come to Normanhurst, Hyacinth rejoined her step-mother, who had just returned.

It was Mrs. Grant who spoke, and she looked straight into her husband's eyes.

"I don't like it, Katy."

"She is charming, Arnold. I think Sir John fortunate. She has one of the sweetest faces I ever saw."

"And the saddest."

"That will change when she is married."

"I am sure I have seen her before."

"Then if you have," retorted his wife, mischievously, "I don't see why you should object to Sir John's choice. Had he promised you to marry someone you had never seen?"

But Arnold had disappeared.

He went upstairs in the small off-room he kept boxes and unused canvases in; he tossed things about until he came to a sketch-book with various fancy drawings. He turned over the leaves hurriedly, and reached the picture of a girl with a face like Hyacinth's, only less matured, less soulful beauty—the same girl, one would have said, only less formed, less tried.

Arnold looked at it eagerly, anxiously.

"It can't be," he muttered; "it must be some favourite fairy of my own; what I fear is impossible. I know John told me Lord Norman kept his daughter so closely shut up as though she was a professed nun. I recollect his saying she was a perfect child that up in the schoolroom with a governess. I am the victim of some dreadful fancy."

But the fancy would not leave him. He went down to dinner, he tried to answer his wife's bright talk. He struggled bravely to hide from her his secret care.

But Katy was too fond of him not to see there was something amiss.

"He has not got on with his picture," she thought to herself. "I must try and divert his thoughts."

So she spoke of Hyacinth Dane, and said how pleased she would be if it were possible to go to her wedding, and she asked her husband whether it was possible to accept Lady Norman's invitation.

"We will go," he returned, quickly. "I can't miss Carlyle's wedding, even though I disapprove his choice."

"Disapprove his choice! Why, Arnold, she is quite perfect—a charming bride!"

Arnold shook his head.

"She is very beautiful; lovely as a poet's dream. But good old Jack wanted a wife who loved him; ay, and deserved one, too."

"How do you know Lady Hyacinth does not love him?"

Arnold sighed.

"Ah, Katy, you are not worldly wise. Lady Hyacinth has done her loving. Her heart has been given away once; her hand she will bestow this month on Sir John Carlyle just because he happens to be a millionaire."

"I think you're horrid, Arnold," said his pretty wife, severally, "quite perfectly horrid."

He kissed her.

"I must leave you alone this afternoon, child. I have some business I must attend to. Don't fidget if I'm late for tea. I have to go to the library and a few other places."

"All right. I'll wait."

"No, don't," and he was off.

He did not go to the library first. Oh, no! He took the Underground Railway from Gower-street to Victoria, and then walked on in the dripping rain, through quiet streets and busy thoroughfares, until he came to a church which seemed to him familiar.

The door stood open, and he went in. It was one of those churches which always are open. Fortune favoured the artist; one of the clergy stood giving directions to the clerk.

Arnold stepped up to him, and with a bow proffered some request.

"Certainly," returned the rector, "if you

will step this way I can show you the books myself."

Arrived in the vestry he gave Mr. Grant a chair, and placed before him a large volume bound in vellum.

Then with a rare delicacy he turned aside whilst the stranger opened the book and turned at once to a page near the end which contained several dates in the November of the preceding year. Only five minutes, and he found what he wanted. He had solved the awful doubt which troubled him.

The rector saw him start, and perceiving the guest was ended, came back to his side.

"Would you like a copy of the entry?"

"If you please," and he produced his two-and-severpence, as though the statement he found clearly concerned his own happiness.

A folded paper was given to him in a few minutes, and he walked back to the busy streets.

But with what a changed appearance! His face was ashy white, and his lips shook under strong excitement.

"It can't be," he mutters; "no one could be so wicked, so infamous. I can't believe that, come what may."

Mr. Grant was reckless with his money that afternoon. He indulged in the luxury of a cab, and reached the library to which he belonged by five o'clock. He went to the reading-room and called for a file of the *Times*.

"This year and last," he said, hurriedly; "begin from November."

He leant one elbow on the table and shaded his eyes under his hand as he began his self-imposed task. He searched one by one through all the papers for nearly three long months. Then he gave a start, and pushed the file away from him.

"I thank Heaven," he muttered. "I thought it could not be as I feared. Thank Heaven! But oh! what must she not have suffered!"

He had found what he sought, reader, and he had discovered one half of Hyacinth's secret.

## CHAPTER V.

SIR JOHN CARLYLE had his way; the arrangements for the wedding were on a scale of extreme magnificence. Eight titled maidens—three of them duke's daughters—were to attend Hyacinth to the altar. People had come from far and near to do honour to Lord Norman's child. Normanhurst was filled from basement to attic. Never in living memory had such a brilliant throng gathered in the grand old mansion.

Mr. and Mrs. Grant were not present. Katy was unforgivably disappointed, but the artist stood his ground.

"It is not the expense, child," he said, fondly; "he would make that up, somehow. I have a special reason for not wanting to witness Sir John's wedding."

"And he is your oldest friend! Oh, Arnold!"

"My oldest friend; and so I will not countenance by my presence the ceremony which will make him wretched."

"Wretched! When Lady Hyacinth is all that is sweet and lovely?"

"She does not love him," returned the artist, gravely. "Katy, I cannot explain myself. I daresay I seem to you to have taken leave of my senses, but I have a firm presentiment no good will come of this marriage; it will bring nothing but misery to them both."

He sat down and wrote to his old friend briefly, saying it was impossible for them to leave London at present; and Katy sent a few lines to Lady Hyacinth expressing her regards and showing pretty plainly, poor little woman, it was not her fault they declined the invitation. Sir John looked puzzled when Hyacinth showed him Mrs. Grant's note.

"She wanted to come, then, and the difficulties are made by Arnold. I fancied nothing would have kept him from me at such a time."

"I think he disapproves," suggested the bride, timidly.

"Disapproves!" Of what?"

"Of me."

"Nonsense," said Sir John, almost gruffly; "what could make you think of such a thing?"

"I don't know."

"You must have some reason, Hyacinth."

"Well, then, he was not candid and friendly, like his wife, but as stiff and cold as possible. He persisted he had seen me before, and I can't put it into words, John, but his whole manner seemed to say he thought you were making a great mistake."

"I don't care what he thinks, but I am hurt, Hyacinth. I would have staked my soul on Arnold's friendship."

The twenty-eighth came at last—calm, serene, and lovely, just an ideal wedding-day. The sky was blue and cloudless, the air soft and balmy; one would have said nature had turned back a few months in compliment to the happy pair.

Miss Johnson came into the bride's room with a dainty tray of breakfast.

"My darling!" and she kissed her, "I hope, oh I hope you will be happy. It is such a beautiful day, Hyacinth, so bright and fair. I should like to think it was an emblem of your future life."

Hyacinth trembled.

"I wonder if it is very wicked!" she asked in a faint voice. "I cannot think; my head feels on fire. Oh, tell me if I ought to draw back now—while there is yet time."

"Draw back now!" gasped Miss Johnson; "impossible. The church is decorated and carpeted with red cloth, the bridesmaids are dressing. Draw back now, my dear!—it is too late."

Hyacinth said nothing more. She turned her head on her pillow and closed her eyes.

"You must eat some breakfast," urged her old friend, "or you will be faint and ill."

"I can't."

But again persuaded, she raised the cup of coffee to her lips and drank it with feverish thirst; the caskets she sent away untouched—they would have choked her.

Lady Norman and her own maid dressed the bride. When their work was completed, they stood for one moment gazing at her in speechless satisfaction, since it seemed to them they had realised her beauty.

"Sir John will be delighted," murmured the Countess. "Hyacinth, you have five minutes to spare. I want to show you a wedding present which has just arrived;" and she placed in the bride's hand an exquisite bouquet-holder in carved filigree silver.

"Is it not beautiful?"

"Charming. Who sent it?"

"Lord Montrevor."

A kind of dim memory came to Hyacinth that she had heard that name before—that once, long ago, it had had a special interest for her.

"Lord Montrevor!" she repeated; "have I ever seen him?"

"I think not; he is an old friend of your father's, a most eccentric man. I never could bear him."

"What has he done eccentric?"

"Oh, he kept single till he was past seventy, and had brought up his nephew as his heir; then he suddenly married his housekeeper. I suppose he was ashamed of himself, for he kept the secret five years, until he had three children, and the late housekeeper grew impatient for their rights."

Hyacinth laid down the bouquet-holder as if it had stung her.

"I don't like his story. I wish he had not sent me a present."

"You haven't heard the end of his story, which is even more romantic. The three children died in one week of some contagious fever, the nephew was killed in Africa, and at this moment Lord Montrevor is wringing his hands for want of an heir."

White as marble had grown the bride's face.

Frightened at her pallor, though she had no idea what caused it, Lady Norman hastily made her swallow a glass of wine.

"I shall leave you now, Hyacinth. The carriage for you and your father will be at the door directly I have started. You look awfully

white; you had better sit in this low chair till they come to call you."

It might have been hours instead of minutes to Hyacinth's troubled mind before the maid appeared.

"The Earl is waiting, my lady;" and then for the last time Hyacinth walked down the stairs of Normanhurst as one of its inmates. Henceforward she would be only an occasional visitor.

Her father met her in the hall, and drew her hand through his arm.

"I have told them to drive fast," he said to her; "we are very late."

That was all. No word of fatherly affection, of regret for their parting; no kindly hopes for the future. They sat opposite to each other in the brougham, and never exchanged a single remark until the carriage stopped before the porch of the Red Cross church.

Hyacinth's bridesmaids formed themselves into a procession behind her as she advanced leaning on the Earl's arm. The autumn sunshine poured into the beautiful old church, lighting up the fair faces and brilliant toiletts.

The organ thundered forth the Wedding March, and all the while Hyacinth saw nothing, heard nothing; she only felt that she stood on the edge of a precipice, that she was crossing a rubicon from which it would be impossible to turn back, that she was raising up an awful barrier between herself and the past.

The solemn service began, two deans and a bishop were to tie the nuptial knot.

Hyacinth listened as though in a dream. She repeated the responses after the clergyman; she gave her hand passively to Sir John at the proper time, but throughout all she had the same strange dazed sensation, as though she herself were far away, and this brilliant crowd, this solemn service concerned her not at all.

The last words were spoken. Sir John led his wife into the vestry to sign her name for the last time.

The bishop gave her a pen, and she wrote "Hyacinth" in clear, bold characters. Then she paused. One would really have said she had forgotten what came next, and Sir John, noticing the absent look on her face, repeated the old name for her letter by letter, as though she had been a little child. Then he whispered,

"This has been too much for you, my darling; the sooner you are at home the better."

But it was not to be yet. Lady Hyacinth had to receive the felicitations of the bishop and his assistants; she had to receive the kisses of her parents and the bridesmaids. It was a good ten minutes before Sir John could lead her down the aisle to the waiting carriage.

It was over. To that brilliant wedding succeeded a stately banquet. There were speeches and toasts without end—it seemed hours to Hyacinth before she could go upstairs and exchange her white dress for a travelling costume. The bridesmaids were in attendance; Lady Norton herself was assisting, but Hyacinth's last words and last confidences were for her old governess.

"You will write to me," she entreated; "you will write often and tell me everything!"

And then, to the surprise of everyone, she threw herself in Miss Johnson's arms and kissed her.

"I trust you," whispered Hyacinth, in a voice inaudible to all but the kind old maid; "remember, you are the only friend I have. Be true to me."

The only friend she had when those eight titled damsels clung round her with affectionate leave-takings; the only friend she had when three peeresses were already disputing among themselves the honour of presenting the millionaire's wife to Her Majesty at the first Drawing Room next season.

It was over at last. The last good-byes had been said, the last slipper, the last shower of rice thrown. Normanhurst was left behind; and the bride and bridegroom had really started for London.

They crossed the same evening, and early morning found them in the gay French capital.

Sir John, who was thoroughly at home in Paris, had engaged a charming apartment close to the Champ Elysées, a number of servants had been sent on, and everything was in readiness for their reception.

Breakfast was ready, but Sir John insisted upon his wife seeking repose, and left her at the door of her own room.

He was going to have a bath and execute some commissions, he told her, and she must rest, and be quite herself on his return.

"How he loves me!" thought the one day's wife, as she laid her head on the pillow, and slept that heavy dreamless slumber which often follows great excitement.

When she awoke it was nearly one o'clock, and her maid was standing by the bedside with a bouquet of hothouse flowers.

"Sir John sent these, my lady," said the Abigail, respectfully; "and breakfast will be ready in half-an-hour."

So their married life began, and never was husband more devoted than Sir John—never wife more submissive and yielding than Lady Hyacinth Carlyle.

They went to everything worth seeing; they soon knew everyone worth knowing in Paris; they were described as a most devoted couple.

Sir John attended his wife to promenades and concerts; he drove her in the Bois de Boulogne; took her to the theatre—in short, all that mortal could devise for her pleasure he carried out.

Only as the days wore on a strange blank chill of disappointment took possession of his heart. He was no nearer to his wife. Sweet-tempered and amiable to him and to all the world, there was yet an impassable barrier between him and Hyacinth, a mountain of reserve divided them that he found it impossible to cross.

He loved her as much as ever—nay, more; but yet he was fain to confess, after weeks of wedlock, she was no nearer to him than when he saw her first on the chintz-covered sofa in the housekeeper's room at The Elms—no nearer, but, alas! how much more dear!

He could not understand it. She had declared he had no rival. Knowing her past life, too, it seemed to him impossible she should have had another love than himself.

He had no rival, then, and she admitted that she liked him. Why could she not love him?—why was her heart stealed against him?

He meant to win in time. He was playing for a great stake—his wife's heart. The prize was difficult of attainment, but he never doubted it would be his at last.

"Hyacinth," he said to her, pleasantly, one bleak December afternoon, "what shall we do? Paris is growing too cold. Will you go south, or return home to England?"

"Which would you rather?"

"I have no choice but yours. I only want to make you happy, my darling."

She put her hand in his.

"How good you are to me, John!"

"Where are you going to be good to me?"

"How?"

"Child, don't you know what I am waiting for? Hyacinth, don't you know the only boon I covet in the world is my wife's heart?"

She blushed.

"I told you—" she began, hesitatingly.

He interrupted her.

"I know you did. I am not reproaching you, Hyacinth; only, my darling, if you know the agony it is to me to be so near you, and yet to have your heart closed against me!"

She looked at him with a wealth of tenderness shining in her dark eyes. Hyacinth burst into a passionate fit of sobbing.

"I wish I had never been born!" she said, brokenly. "I bring nothing but trouble to everyone! Oh, John, don't you wish you had left me that night in the snow?"

"No, a thousand times!" cried her husband, promptly, almost terrified at the outburst, which was so unlike Hyacinth's usual calm. "My darling, I would rather have you, even like this, than not have you at all!"

"You are quite sure!"

"Certain."

She smiled a little wistfully.

"Then I haven't done anything so very wicked, after all," words which, when she uttered them, her husband set down as incoherent and meaningless, but which were to return to him with terrible significance.

"You have not answered my question, Hyacinth. We must leave here next week. Shall we turn our faces homewards or go on to Mentone or Cannes?"

"I should like to go home."

"So be it. Truth to say, I shall not be sorry to spend Christmas in England. Tell your maid to pack up. Let me see; what were we going to do to-night?"

"We had promised to dine with the Countess Bonnone."

"Ah! Do you feel well enough?"

"Perfectly."

But the storm of the morning had frightened her, and she looked terribly wan and fragile when she came downstairs ready for the expedition.

"You look dreadfully pale, sweetheart," said her husband. "Are you quite sure you are equal to it?"

"Quite. The Countess would be so disappointed if we failed her; besides, as we are going home next week, this may be our last visit."

They were rather late, and the rest of the guests had assembled. The Countess came forward to greet them, and the party went in to dinner.

It was a pleasant scene. Madame Bonnone gave charming parties. After the dinner there was a gathering in the salon, to which about a hundred guests were invited.

Hyacinth sat talking to one and another for an hour; then a mist came before her eyes; the room seemed to swim round with her. There, not a dozen yards off, stood the doctor who had attended her at Sands End.

She could not be mistaken. She and Miss Johnson had thought at the time he was very different from an ordinary country practitioner, and had been told he had only settled in Whitby to be near his aged parents, and possessed ample private means.

Hyacinth confessed he looked quite at home here in this stately throng; but if he recognised her—

What was she to do? In ordinary cases it would have mattered little; she need only have said to her husband,—

Dr. Warburton attended me when I was ill this summer."

But now there were reasons why this was impossible.

"He will not recognise me," hoped and prayed the poor girl. "People look so different when they are ill."

Aye; but to-night she appeared as pale and fragile as ever she had done at Sands End. Clad in silk and jewels, Dr. Warburton might have had misgivings; but Hyacinth was the simplest-attired lady in the room.

She turned over a volume of engravings. She wished—oh, she wished from the bottom of her heart—her husband would come and take her home; but Sir John was at the other end of the room in conversation with the Count. Listening indeed, to his host's praises of his wife, it was impossible she could catch his eye.

Hyacinth bent her graceful head over the engravings. She tried to answer the polite remarks of her neighbour, an English widow, but she felt her replies were astray and inappropriate.

"I am sure you are ill," her companion said at last, "you are looking so terribly white."

Hyacinth opened her lips to answer—too late! Dr. Warburton had caught sight of her, and was walking with rapid strides towards her. Hyacinth sat motionless. She felt glad to her chair; she absolutely could not rise.

"This is, indeed, an unexpected meeting!" began the physician, in his kind, cordial tones. "I little thought to find one of my old patients here to-night."

Hyacinth strove to answer—to make some reply, however meaningless, but words would

not come. She raised her violet eyes to the doctor's face with an expression which haunted him for weeks afterwards, and then, with one smothered sob, she fell forward senseless. For the second time in her life she had fainted away.

"There is some mystery here," thought the doctor to himself. "Poor child! were things as I feared, and does she think I should betray her?"

He bent forward, raised the slight form in his arms, and carried her to a sofa. Then, as Madame Bonnone and two or three other ladies came hurriedly up, he said, reassuringly,—

"It is only a swoon."

"Lady Hyacinth has looked wretchedly ill all the evening," said the Countess. "I must send for Sir John."

"Sir John," repeated Dr. Warburton, as one at a loss. "Ah, I suppose you mean her father?"

"Her husband. She is a bride of only six weeks' standing, and they are the most devoted couple."

The physician felt bewildered. Was he dreaming? Could he be mistaken? Could two girls have such an angel face, such sad, expressive eyes?

The patient he had attended around the Yorkshire hills had been so poor that he knew every penny was an object to her—so poor that he had hesitated at taking her money.

She left him with the idea she meant to take a situation, and earn her daily bread. He met her again in the most fashionable drawing-room in Paris, a lady of title and a bride.

"I can't be mistaken," he muttered; "there can't be two such faces; besides, she wouldn't have fainted away at the sight of me if I had been a stranger."

Sir John came up, an expression of abject misery on his face. He addressed himself at once to the doctor.

"Save her for me!" he said, hoarsely. "She is all I have—the apple of my eye! Oh, doctor, if you have any pity in your heart, save my wife!"

"There is no danger," answered Dr. Warburton, touched by the strong man's anguish. "I think I recognise in your wife an old patient of my own. I was just telling her so when she fainted."

"She was the Earl of Norman's only child—Lady Hyacinth Dana. She has not been quite strong lately. I know she spent the summer in Yorkshire, so it is possible you are not mistaken."

Friendly hands had been busy with Hyacinth, kindly voices had recalled the spirit hovering on shadowland; her violet eyes had opened once more on the world's joys and sorrows.

"Take me home."

The words only just reached Sir John's ears.

"Yes, my darling. I will go and find the carriage. Dr. Warburton will bring you down-stairs."

He sped away. The physician turned to the friends who had flocked round Hyacinth.

"You had better not agitate her by talking. You had better let her go quietly home."

He gave her his arm, and half led, half carried her down the grand staircase. For one moment she stood alone, awaiting Sir John's return.

"Dr. Warburton."

"Oh! how worn and wretched her voice sounded! The tone of the two words told the physician he was not mistaken, and that the whole future lay in his hands. He was a true man, but for her sake he stooped to deception. He pined her so intensely, he could not let her know she was in his power.

"I must apologise, Lady Hyacinth. I fear I startled you. I was struck by your resemblance to one of my patients. I had forgotten how strong chance likenesses are, and how utterly impossible it would be for the girl I was thinking of to be in Paris."

Hyacinth's heart leaped within her. He had not recognised her really, he only saw a fancied likeness. She was safe.

"You will think me very foolish," she said,

quietly, "but I have been ill, and am sadly upset."

"I shall ask Sir John's leave to call on you tomorrow. I hope I may be of use to you!"

Sir John gave leave willingly. He was seriously alarmed about his wife, and he detested foreign doctors.

"Warburton's a very clever fellow," he said to Hyacinth, when he saw her the next morning, very white, and still lying on a couch in her dressing-room. "I hear he's quite at the top of the tree. I am glad he has offered to see after you. It seems you remind him of a pet patient, so he is sure to do his best."

But though Sir John spoke cheerfully to his wife, he was terribly anxious about her. He remembered the night of the snow-storm, and her long exposure to the damp and cold. Could it really be that she had never recovered from the shock her constitution had then sustained?

He took a fancy to Dr. Warburton, and poured out his story.

"I don't want to speak against her father, but there is no doubt she was shamefully neglected. I tell you, sir, when I first saw her she was not even dressed as became an Earl's daughter; she looked like nothing but a beautiful, unhappy child."

Dr. Warburton listened gravely; he knew quite well the secret Hyacinth had kept from her husband.

"But why should I tell him?" argued the kind physician. "The past is past—the poor girl has suffered terribly; why shouldn't she have a chance of happiness with this good fellow, who worships her? To speak would be to wreck both their lives, and I won't do it!"

"You think her delicate?" said Sir John. "Where shall I take her? What treatment do you recommend? Tell me plainly. I am a rich man, and my wife is the one object of my life!"

Dr. Warburton recommended a winter in the sunny South. He gave it as his opinion that Lady Hyacinth required perfect rest, freedom from all excitement. Presentation at Court, and the fatigues of a London season would be fatal to her. He thought that in ten months of complete tranquillity she would recover tone, and enjoy good health.

Sir John regarded the physician as if he had been an oracle. He gave up all idea of returning to England, but hired a pretty villa on the shores of the tideless sea.

Here they spent the winter and early spring-time, when their retreat became too hot with the advancing summer. Sir John brought his wife back to Paris, and took a pretty maisonette at Neuilly, near enough for the advantage of the capital, and yet removed from its bustle and excitement.

And here, with the bright July sunshine, it seemed to Sir John that the crowning joy of his life came to him. A little daughter was given to him and Hyacinth—a child, who looked at them with her mother's violet eyes, whose baby fingers he fondly dreamed would lead him one day nearer to his wife.

Hyacinth was a loving mother, and yet her child's fingers brought her no good. The baby teeth filled her with unconquerable regret and yearning. She loved her daughter, and yet she never looked at her without a dull burden of reproach tugging at her heart-strings, and a yearning, which was keenest pain, for something she had lost.

Whilst their richer friends were travelling abroad and enjoying the southern climate, Mr. and Mrs. Grant were settling themselves in a house of their own.

It meant a great deal to Katy, a little house of which she was mistress, instead of the three rooms which had hitherto constituted her sole domain; it meant, too, the very launching into such extravagance, that prosperity had dawned on the young couple, or more truly, perhaps, commenced to dawn.

Katy quite forgot her disappointment in being excluded from Sir John's wedding festivities in her joy at taking possession of her pretty home; true, it was the dull November weather when they moved in, their tenancy dating from the half-quarter, but that did not prevent her

imagining great things from the strip of ground behind, which she proudly termed our back garden.

"But who will live next to us, Arnold?" she asked, a little plaintively, when she was fairly at home at No. 1, Acacia Cottages.

And this question really concerned her comfort. Acacia Cottages stood facing a private garden, the only small houses for quite a mile in the delightful suburb of Elmer's End. Their rents were only forty pounds, their accommodation limited. It depended on the character of the occupants whether they were to rank in the locality as "small, genteel residences" or not.

It became quite an occupation to Mrs. Grant to wonder who would take number two.

"It would be so dreadful, Arnold, if it was any common person who kept no servant; you know the hedge between the gardens is so low the children could get over and steal our flowers!"

"We haven't got any flowers yet, Katy."

"You provoking man! But, of course, we shall have."

"Oh! of course. Fourteen feet square will produce roses worthy to take the prizes at the Crystal Palace flower show—that's your belle, isn't it, Katy?"

Katy turned away in pretended indignation; after that she did not say quite so much about her future neighbours, but she still kept a severe watch on all people who called to inspect number two, and as—*to accommodate the landlord—the key was left in Mrs. Grant's keeping, she certainly had every opportunity for gratifying her curiosity.*

She came home one December afternoon rather later than usual, and found her little servant in a perfect ecstasy of excitement.

"Oh! if you please, mum, next door is let!"

"Let?" and all Katy's fears returned in full force. "Why, those last people had given up all thought of it!"

"Yes, mum. The landlord himself came down, and brought a lady to look over it, and she said at once she would take it; and she wants to come in as soon as possible!"

"What was she like, Susan?"

Susan rubbed her head.

"Oidish, mum, and very thin and stiff; she had on a real black silk dress, and she didn't seem to mind what she spent, so that she could come in soon!"

"Dear me!"

A further surprise was in store for her. The landlord himself called that very evening.

"Mrs. Grant," he said, simply, "I have come to ask you to be kind to my new tenant. She is a very lonely woman, and I think she will be moped to death here if she has no one to speak to. Now as she is a very good tenant, and likely to be a nice neighbour for you, I thought I'd just come in and tell you about her."

"What can one lady want with a whole house?"

"Can't say, I'm sure. She is a woman of independent means. I happen to her lawyer, and so I know I couldn't have a safer tenant!"

"Is she young?"

The landlord being sixty saw the question of age from a very different standpoint.

"She's not old, Mrs. Grant; a right down nice woman, and I hope you'll be good friends!"

The "right down nice" woman did not come incessantly to and fro to look at her new abode. Three days after that announcement a vanload of furniture drew up, and poor Mrs. Grant had a fit of envy. They had been compelled to make a great many shifts when they took possession of their house; as a fact, there was the bare carpet, and no bed besides their own, and an unpretending truckle for Susan, but the newcomer did things very differently. There were two suites—cretonne for the drawing-room, leather and mahogany for the dining-room, light, pretty, pine furniture for the bedroom, and quite a wealth of kitchen utensils. But what attracted Mrs. Grant most was a child's cot; the prettiest little swinging cot imaginable, draped with white muslin and blue satin.

Poor Katy! The time was not very far distant when she might require a little cot,

but certainly she could never afford one like that.

"I suppose she is a widow," was Mrs. Grant's reflection. "She must have married late in life to be left with a baby young enough for that cot."

A day or two passed, two neat maid-servants appeared at number two, and in course of time their mistress followed. Katy gave her a week in which to get straight, and then duly arrayed in her best walked the few steps which separated the two cottages, and knocked bravely at the door.

Not until the servant appeared did it dawn upon her that she had never heard her neighbour's name.

"Can I see your mistress?"

She was shown into a charming little drawing-room.

"Miss Johnson will be here directly, ma'am," said the servant.

Only a minute's delay, and a middle-aged lady came in, dressed in black silk, with a pretty little cap on her faded hair.

Katy felt nervous.

"We live next door," she said, rather abruptly, "and Mr. Mason thought I might take the liberty of calling on you."

"I am so pleased," said poor Miss Johnson. "I have seen you in the garden, Mrs. Grant, and I longed to speak to you, for I am just moped to death, with no one to say a word to me. Mr. Mason recommended me this house, but I don't think I can stop."

"Surely you are not disappointed in it? We think these cottages so convenient."

"So they may be, but they are fearfully dull. You are twenty years younger, my dear, and you have a husband to keep you company. But for an old maid like me, who has never lived alone in her life before, I think Acacia Cottage just the worst place in the world."

"But are you alone? I thought, I mean, we saw a little crib, and—"

Miss Johnson looked confused.

"Oh, yes! I am expecting a little boy shortly; his parents are abroad, and I have promised to take care of him. I hope I shall do my duty, but a baby in arms is not much of a companion, Mrs. Grant."

"You must come and see me," said Katy, cheerfully; "our house isn't half so grand as yours, but if you won't mind, and will bring in your work and sit with me one afternoon, I shall be so pleased."

Miss Johnson looked as though she would like to begin that very afternoon.

"You see," she said, a little plaintively, "I never was my own mistress before."

"No."

"I have been a governess more than thirty years; you can't think how strange it seems, Mrs. Grant to be able to arrange one's day just as one likes."

"It must be pleasant."

Miss Johnson shook her head.

"I was very tired of teaching, very, and I dreaded looking out for another situation; then my uncle died and left me six hundred a-year."

It was more than double Mrs. Grant's income; it seemed to Katy just a little hard.

"What a comfort for you."

Miss Johnson sighed.

"Just a few pounds a year to keep me from the workhouse would have been better. Don't you see, Mrs. Grant, I've got nothing to do, the servants see to the housework. There's no need to pinch, and screw, and plan; I never was a great reader, and so how to pass my time I can't imagine."

"But you will have the little boy to amuse you; he will be quite a treasure to you."

"I hope I shall be able to make him happy."

"I am sure you will."

"And you really won't mind if I come in and sit with you sometimes?"

"I shall be delighted; my husband is constantly shut up in his studio, and, excepting at meal-times, I am nearly as much alone as you."

There was no one to warn Miss Johnson of danger. She who would have guarded Hy-

child's child with her life yet drifted into an intimacy with the man who had judged Hyacinth in his own heart, and condemned her.

At first Mrs. Grant had given the invitation out of sheer compassion, but in less than a month she had conceived a warm attachment for the kind old maid. Miss Johnson was always ready to do a kindness; her little charge had arrived, a lovely child with—it seemed to Katy—almost a princely outfit; his guardian was most willing to lend his little garments as models, nay, she spent hours in helping Mrs. Grant to copy them. When Katy's appetite failed, she brought in delicacies manufactured by her own cook, which would have been far beyond Susan's skill had her mistress indulged in such expensive ingredients. In short, Miss Johnson was like a sort of adopted aunt to her young neighbours. Arnold called her "a good old soul," and Katy learned to love her dearly.

She was never in their way, she seemed to know by instinct when they wanted to be alone, but she helped and cheered the wife in a hundred little ways; she gave the husband freely her newspapers and reviews. In short, before three months had passed, Mr. and Mrs. Grant confessed that Providence must have had an especial eye to their benefit when it induced Miss Johnson to come to Acacia Cottage.

She never talked of herself; this created no surprise in their minds, her first statement that she had been a governess all her life, and recently came into a little fortune, explained her reticence to the Grants. What past could a woman who had lived always in other people's houses have to talk about! As to the child, it was easy to understand that the parents were very poor, and gone abroad in search of occupation; she had taken charge of the baby that his mother might be free to join her husband.

"And she's awfully good to it," said Arnold Grant to his wife. "I think if it were a prince she couldn't make a greater point of its comfort. It's a pretty child enough, but how she does dress it; no one who met that boy out would guess he lived on charity."

"We don't know that he does."

"Miss Johnson has had him six months," returned her husband, "and you know the dear old lady can't even cash a cheque or present a post-office order without asking your help and advice. If she had received money for the boy's board we must have heard of it; besides, Katy, when old maids have got six hundred a-year they don't need to add to their income by taking in other people's children."

"But for the society, the interest."

"I don't think you'll find anyone anxious to take charge of your Nellie for the interest her society would give them."

"I wouldn't part with her," cried the indignant mother; "for by this time the little garments Miss Johnson helped to fashion were in daily use, and number one, Acacia Cottage, had followed the example of number two, and set up a baby."

And the baby was as indebted to Miss Johnson as her mother; the nurse and pramulator were capable of conducting two children for airings, and many and many a quiet afternoon Katy owed to the kindness of her next-door neighbour. She used to protest sometimes, but Miss Johnson only answered with a smile,—

"I am very glad to be of a little use, and remember, my dear, how lonely my life would be without you. I owe you more than you do me, Katy."

Miss Johnson was the baby's godmother, and loved the little girl dearly, but not as she loved her own special baby next door. In her affection for him was mixed so much sorrow, such evident sadness, that Mrs. Grant often longed to ask her what mystery hung over his birth, but she felt instinctively there was some reason for her friend's reserve, and delicacy kept her silent.

Only one glad September day she found her friend in tears, and asking her tenderly what was the matter, Miss Johnson replied gently,—

"Baby's mother is coming to-morrow. Oh! Katy, I am so glad."

Katy understood there would be no intercourse between the two cottagers the next day, but her

curiosity was very keen; she could not help sitting in her front parlour that she might see the unknown mother who had been content to leave her child for six months in another's keeping.

At twelve o'clock a private carriage drove up to the door of Miss Johnson's house, and a lady, young and fair, alighted. Katy gave a start; was she dreaming, or could it be possible that this was the girl who, twelve months before, had invited her to her wedding?

Surely it was she! The features, the figure, were identical, and yet it could not be; it was absurd, impossible, that was Lady Hyacinth Dane, now Sir John Carlyle's wife—this was a mother so poor she could not even afford to bring up her child under her own eye.

(To be continued.)

## SWEETHEART AND TRUE.

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### CHAPTER I.

Oh, mistress mine, where are you roaming?  
O, stay and hear; your true love's coming.  
Trip no further, pretty sweeting!  
Journey's end in lover's meeting,  
Every wise man's son doth know!

THE beauty of an August noon lay over the land—mellow, sweet, and full of fragrance!

A stillness rested on all Nature, born of the lulling summer calm and the rich, ripened languor of the waning noonday; that "still" which summer alone sends to earth, broken only by the hum of insect life, the distant lowing of oxen, or the far-away chime of bells.

The sun-god still burnt in the heavens fiercely enough from the sapphire sky, for the noon had only just come and gone, and the cooler breath of evening was waiting to blow down from the amethyst hills its cooler softness on the little village of Pont l'Abbaye, nestling under the wooded heights and purple-crowned hills in complete Arcadian charm and simplicity, where surely nothing rough or harmful seemed as if it could reach one—past which, too, thelapping river went swirling by on its way to the sea but three miles further on.

The waters had been running golden in the sun glare all the livelong day; now, slowly and evenly, great branching tree shadows flung themselves lazily across the molten pathway, which, too, reflected back the woods and hills above.

Past the nestling quiet village, and towards the distant sea, a little tangled-grown creek ran straight up from the river, hedged on either side with great water-weeds, rushes, drooping alders, and again old chestnut trees, which had seen years come and go amid no change, tranquilly unmindful of the flight of time.

At the junction of the creek and the river an old cumbersome, wherry-built, green-painted boat swung from a chain fastened to an iron staple driven deep into the bank.

A little roughly-made wooden landing-stage projected from the bank into the running stream, and close to the staple, so that one could easily step down from the wooden landing-place into the boat free of the high-growing bulrushes and rank sedges lining the water sides.

In all the beauty of the landscape; in the glory of this August noonday, the green-painted, cumbersome old boat, swinging in the stream held the only visible living breathing soul—a girl and a dog!

The girl sat in the centre of the wherry, with her elbows planted on her knees, and her chin resting on her clasped hands, staring meditatively at the dog in front. He, sitting on his haunches, returned his mistress' gaze with a most perfect placidity of demeanour and expression, as if he rather enjoyed being stared out of countenance. His calmness, at any rate, showed that he did not resent the meditative stare.

And, indeed, there was no atom of reason why he should, for it was a very sweet face that looked so earnestly into his. Sweet, fresh, and

full of youthful charm, what more could anyone desire, be he human or canine!

Had she been on canvas one might have said, "Ah! a pastel of Latour's!" for she just looked like one of the great French painter's beautiful creations, garbed in a cambric gown, with a wide-brimmed Panama straw hat bent down over her eyes, and tied down under her chin by a faded blue ribbon. She had, too, fastened a little spray of wild hop and two fragrant pink oleander blooms in the front of her shady head-gear, which added the one touch of colour to an enchanting whole.

Beautiful as Latour's pastels invariably are, perhaps this living, breathing piece of human girlhood was more charming still.

As for the dog, he was a great big black Russian poodle, with half-shaven body, tail and legs, at the end of which had been left a little bushy tuft of black hair, like a small mop. This appendage he beat on the planks of the boat at odd times and seasons as occasion demanded affirmation, negation, or approval. Speech being denied him, he used his tail to express his emotion, pleasurable or otherwise.

He had been christened Zouave!

"Zouave," began the girl, thoughtfully, still gazing into the dog's placid face in front of her, "I do really and truly believe you are the only thing in all this wide world that loves me. It sounds rather a mournful sort of thing to say, I know; for all that it is true, I do believe, my dog."

Zouave stared up unblinkingly into his mistress's face as she uttered this profoundly melancholy sentiment. She was right; it did sound most mournful from her pretty red mouth. No doubt he thought so too, for if ever love looked out from living eyes, it certainly shone from his to hers, though they were but dog's eyes after all.

"I do love you dearly!" they said plainly enough in their own mute fashion; "dearly, faithfully, with all my dog's heart to be with you wherever you may be, to come at your call, do your bidding if possible, watch and guard you, kiss your soft, cool hand when you let me, and forsake you never, never, never! If this means love, then, indeed, I do truly love you, my sweet little mistress."

The girl read all this in his eyes well enough, but she went on almost wistfully.

"I wish you could say just yes or no, Zouave. I know you would if it were possible. Still, I want to hear it spoken aloud in my own tongue. The language of the eyes does not altogether satisfy me. How very sweet it must be to hear a voice whisper quite softly, 'I love you, Olive!' Now, wouldn't it, my dog?" she ended, interrogatively.

The dog gave one short sharp bark, no doubt of assent. He felt his mistress was asking him some question of immense importance which necessitated a reply. So he answered her with this one assenting bark.

"That means yes, of course. Well, I suppose I must be content with your fashion of answering a question, since I cannot get any other. Half a loaf is better than none at all, and we cannot seemingly get all we want in this odd world we live in, neither you or I for that matter, so we must not expect it, that's all. Blessed is he or she, you know, Zouave, that expecteth nothing, for they won't be disappointed. I've learnt to expect nothing, and I find it much the best plan. I'm giving you good, sound, practical advice when I tell you never expect," and Olive nodded sagely as she finished.

The dog remained immovable on his haunches while his mistress harangued him thus quaintly. With slightly uplifted head he followed every movement of those rosy lips, as if anxious to lose not one single syllable of her utterance. No better listener could she possibly have.

"I firmly believe you understand everything I am speaking about, you dear old thing!" she went on softly. "Though you can only bark when I ask you a question, I am sure you know all I say. What a clever dog you are, Zouave, the very cleverest dog I ever met with in my life; not that this fact is any great criterion I own," she put in with an uplifting of the white

brows under her straw hat, "for my experience of things and people, including of course the canine species, is limited, very, very limited, indeed, I confess it; but then it is not my fault, only my great misfortune, and a tiresome one too. Still I know you are cleverer than most animals, including a good many men. I believe you could learn any mortal thing that one chose to teach you—all but one item, and that is speech. You could never learn to talk, more's the pity. If you only could but speak, you would be simply perfect, you darling old dog," ended Olive with an immense amount of honest conviction in her sweet voice.

Then she unclasped her hands from under her chin, and stretching out the two palms towards him, laid them gently on his soft hairy ears, holding his head upwards between them.

"What should I do without you, Zouave?" she murmured most tenderly. "Ah, what indeed! Tell me that if you can, but you cannot because I could not do without you at all. I should have nothing to love, nothing to care for or think of, or confide in, the only friend, companion I possess. Think of it. Some would call me poor to have no other. I don't grumble; you are enough for me. As for sweethearts, they are rather a mistake, it strikes me; a vast deal more trouble than they are worth. Perhaps I ought not to express my opinion so forcibly, because most girls would say I was wrong; but they are a mistake, Zouave, take my word for it. After all, what is a sweetheart? Nothing so much to be proud of, I'm sure," with a quaint comical expression on her red lips; "we don't want any sweethearts, do we, old boy? I know I don't," she added, with some force.

Zouave wagged his tail slowly to and fro for the space of a full minute, beating it on the bottom of the boat after the manner of a miniature stall. I fancy his dog's mind was much exercised as to whether all this fervour proceeded from grief or joy, and he was not wishful to be completely wrong in his answer.

"My private opinion is that I shall never be married, for I shall never marry we know who, I'm very certain. I intend to be such a nice old spinster, and you'll be my faithful old love, won't you?" and again she kissed the rough head, forgetful for the moment that the span of a dog's life is but a short one, and that when age crept over her Zouave would already be in his grave this many a year.

"What a splendid listener you are! You never interrupt, contradict, or argue with me. I have it all my own way, and what I tell you you never repeat. I can confide all my deepest secrets—when I have any, which is seldom—into your old, sympathetic ear, and feel all the happier for my unburdening. Perhaps if I had a human friend I could not be so certain of their secrecy. My poor little secrets, such as they are, might be noised abroad on the wings of the wind when I least expected. But you are as silent as the grave on my confessions. Are you not?"

One single knock of the moptail gave evidence of complete affirmation.

"Come," then put in the girl, a little more briskly, "we really must not waste any more precious time. Or to be perfectly truthful, I must not waste any more time, otherwise poor old Nannette will not get her supper as we promised, and a promise is a sacred thing—no one should break it on any account whatever, say I. My tongue is an awful one to go on wagging. We will go at once, or we shall not be back before dusk."

As she finished the girl reached the long oars lying along the boat, and set them in the rowlocks ready for use.

"We shall not be long getting down stream, that's one comfort, and it will be much cooler by the time we come back. But heat or no heat, I would not disappoint Nannette for a silver crown. It's sad to be old and ailing, not able to enjoy life. Sometimes even I feel old somehow, though I am only twenty. In a few more years I shall be getting old. Yes; and so will you, my dog. Ah! don't die first, I beseech you. When you die I shall indeed feel alone—quite, quite alone!"

There was a sad ring in her voice at this

moment infinitely pathetic—a kind of sweet monotone that was pleasant to listen to, and at the same time sorrowful. Pleasant because harmonious, though sad.

Then she leaned forward to loosen the chain from the ring that held the boat stationary in the swiftly running stream, and in doing so raised her head, glancing carelessly along the sedgeweed bank by the river. In that same moment she saw something which caused her evident astonishment, for she exclaimed, with quickened breath,—

"Zouave! look, there is someone coming along the bank from Pont l'Abbaye way. A stranger!"

Instinctively the dog turned his head in the direction of his mistress's eyes, and true enough someone was sauntering leisurely along the water-side from the distant village. The someone was a man, and, as Olive herself said, "a stranger!"

He carried a small water-colour box and sketch-book in one hand, and the other held a cigarette half-smoked. Every few paces he stayed his leisurely walk to look carefully about him, evidently trying from an artist's point of view to fix upon the best and likeliest place for a good sketch.

Now, the simple word "stranger" is always, more or less, one of interest to great and small alike. It quickens curiosity in a harmless degree, and excites at the same time a certain wonder in the mind of the beholder as to who, when, where, and what the same may be.

In Pont l'Abbaye this word constituted a phenomenon because of its extreme rarity. Hence it cannot be a matter of surprise that the girl felt a small flutter of pleasant wonder at the advent of a strange someone on the river bank this August noon. It would not have been feminine human nature if she had not.

"An artist, Zouave, depend upon it!" she hissed, in a low, communicative voice, noting the paint-box and the sketch-book in his hand.

Zouave raised one ear stiffly erect, and looked again at the coming figure. He, too, evidently wondered, in his canine mind, who, when, where, and what for it bore no similitude to those masculine figures which usually presented themselves hereabouts in this out-of-the-world Breton country place. He instinctively recognised the complete and vastness of the difference at once with truth and unerring dog sagacity.

Here was no blouse, no sabots, no slouch hat, or faded berrettes, such as the country round indulged in. The features, too, were not cast in the usual Breton mould.

Instead of these types and signs of the bucolic race, here was a man garbed as an English gentleman, whose clothes were unmistakably well cut, who wore them as an English gentleman, and whose face said plainly "true-born Briton."

Zouave put the other ear up as he noted all this, and then he glanced at his mistress, to see what she was going to say or do in the matter; whether converse was going to be held with this apparition, or whether he was to be regarded as a mere filling-in or adjunct of the landscape generally, and to be treated as such with silent contempt.

"Yes, he must be an artist!" said the girl as if in answer to the inquiring gaze bent on hers from her canine companion. "Well, if he is, he will not hurt us, and we shall not hurt him. That's pretty clear logic, isn't it, my dog? So we will be off on our journey at once, and leave him the bank in peace; then he can sketch whatever where he wishes," and once more Olive stretched out her hand to loosen the chain which held the boat in check. "See, he's coming past us, Zouave!" she muttered, in a lower tone; for, indeed, the stranger was close upon the little landing-stage by this time; "we shall see what he's like before we go!"

In that one sentence Olive most emphatically showed the woman.

Here was a stranger—a man—moreover, something new and fresh in her monotonous life, and so she desired to see what he was like, be he young, old, handsome, or ugly; and hence she stayed her hand, ever so little, on the chain as she finally loosened it, as he passed still evenly and leisurely by the old wherry in the stream,

As the man went by he glanced first at the dog, then at the girl.

Had anyone asked Alan Chichester the simple question why he looked first at the dog, and afterwards at the woman, since, assuredly, by rights the woman should have come first, he could not have answered the question satisfactorily either to himself or his questioner, for reason failed to account for the fact.

Instinct may possibly have warned him that sweet girl-faces are dangerous things to look upon, and prevention certainly better than cure.

Then it would have been wiser for him not to have looked at all; had instinct advised him in such fashion; for, in one look, one glance, what joy and sorrow may be wrought unwittingly; what rapture, and, again, what grief, may be sown in one short fleeting moment! A lifetime of bliss and woe!

His glance, however, was not an obtrusive one in the smallest degree, nothing with which the soul could grumble or cavil at, though when it travelled slowly from the dog to the human face it rested there a little longer, perhaps, than was strictly necessary to the occasion, yet how should one find fault for that? Humanity will gaze at its own species, be very sure; and, indeed, to speak honestly, it was really a very pleasant, friendly stare, after all is said.

Then the chain fell with a little splash into the water, and the boat swirled round into the fast running stream, as the stranger moved a few yards further on, and again stopped to contemplate the beautiful landscape.

He did not vonchafe another glance at the drifting wherry or its occupants, but seemed lost in a survey of the scenery round and about him. Presently the stream had carried the boat far past where he stood on the bank, leaving him still wrapt in seeming meditation of the beauties of Nature. But I will not assert that he did not glance once, yes, and even twice, in the direction of that boat ere it finally disappeared round the bend of the river, which hid him, the creek, the landing-stage, and the nestling village from sight.

"Zouave!" said the girl, as they passed round the jutting bend, and she was sweeping the oars dexterously through the water, with a professional wrist; "what is your opinion of the stranger? Is he good, bad, or indifferent honest, think you?"

Zouave had carefully curled himself round in a great black ball at the bottom of the boat when it began to move, and seemed in no mood for discussion. He only blinked his eyes several times, in a lazy, half-hearted kind of fashion. Clearly to him the subject called for no special comment; what could it matter to him or his little mistress whether this artist were good, bad, or even indifferent honest? After these few lazy blinks he closed his eyes.

A few more long strokes with the oars, then Olive said again,—

"I am certain he is a gentleman; he looks every inch one. Don't you agree with me, my dog? Now do answer me, dear old doggie; it becomes monotonous to answer all one's own questions oneself. Come now, say yes or no at once, you bad boy!" authoritatively.

Zouave unclosed his eyes, with a faint protest at being disturbed from his slumbers shining to them, and then he gave one single tall-tap.

"Ah, that means yes! So you do think he looks like a gentleman. Well, we both agree then, and I am sure we are both quite right," in almost a triumphant tone. Then she added, slowly, "and, oh, Zouave! he had such—such grey eyes!"

But this time Zouave was obstinate, and kept his shining eyes firmly closed; not a movement betrayed that he heard his mistress's assertion. If he heard he might have said, "What to me or to you, dear little mistress, are a man's grey eyes?" Ah! what, indeed, Zouave! Well ask that simple question, if you could frame it with your dog's lips. Greater minds than yours have sought in vain to solve the riddle, "What is human love? why is heart knotted to heart, and soul to soul, for weal or woe, grief or joy?"

Ask the wind why it blows, the sun why it

shines, before you say "why do we human creatures love?" It is a problem hitherto un-worked out, a riddle unsolved. So will it be forevermore. We are powerless to answer.

"Oh! you lazy, lazy dog!" put in Olive, reproachfully the next moment, eyeing the recumbent black ball at the bottom of the boat; "I don't believe you are paying the smallest attention to a word I am saying. Stay, though, why should I call you lazy? It is not fair of me, is it!—and I won't. You shall have your nap in peace, dear old Zouave; so slumber and dream, slumber and dream undisturbed. Dreams are always best, they say. Perhaps the massacres are right, if one could only acknowledge it; and yet, are they right? Dreams are sweet enough sometimes, but really must be sweeter still. How I wish I knew!" she ended, wistfully; and the river, lapping against the sides of the old wherry speeding quickly on its way, sang its answer softly and pathetically thus—

"Knowledge is not always sweet, Olive, believe me. You may think so now, because you are young, and do not yet know life as I do. Experience alone will teach you the truth of what I sing to you now. It will come as surely as the year's ebb and flow, like the tide. When age creeps on you, then you will sigh that I have told you the greatest of all living truths."

But the running stream sang its answering song to heedless ears. Age was far away in the dim future; only youth was here—beautiful youth; and youth never needs such songs as these.

"Such—gray—eyes!" murmured the girl, thoughtfully, after a little silence, as the boat glided down the lapping, winding river to the sea.

## CHAPTER II.

Willing or no, who will but what they must, by Destiny!

And can no other choose.

The shadows lengthened slowly over the river as the noon fled away to join the past, flinging their long branching arms across the flow, as if to bar the passage of that cumbersome old wherry with its human freight. But it sped through them easily enough, propelled by the girl's steady sweep of the oars.

The Odet is one of Brittany's most lovely rivers, winding in and out hills, rocks, meadows, and dales in sweet variety. From its source to the sea it is one long scene of beauty.

It had already begun to widen a little as the boat neared its mouth, where it fell into the sea; and Olive could scent the fresh briny smell of the ocean wind stealing upon them even now, as if it were giving a welcome to friends.

The fishing hamlet of Sablette was built at the junction of the sea and river. It was a great place for the sardine fishers, who lived in tiny cots along the sandy reach lining the shore, where they hung or laid their sardine pots to boil in the sun after the laden boats came in with their cargo of little sardines, which were then sent off at once to Carneau to be cured. The hamlet existed by their fishing, and sometimes it went very hard with them.

There had been a large take, however, off Sablette on the previous day and night. The news had reached Pont l'Abbaye, and old Nannette hearing of it had expressed a longing for a few of the little silver fish; hence Olive's journey down the beautiful river to the sea this August noon, for the girl seldom let an opportunity pass of doing some kindness to those about her, were it but of a trifling nature.

The fisherwomen, who sat knitting at the doors of their cots while the nets dried, saw her coming as she ran the boat on to the hard yellow sand of the reach, and quickly shipped her oars. They nodded and smiled pleasantly at her.

"Ah! so you have come to see us once more, mademoiselle," they cried cheerily, as the girl got out of the boat and went nearer them, where they sat on the wooden benches at work.

All the fisherfolk in Sablette knew her. They had seen her for many years, coming to and fro,

now and again—seen her from child to woman; and she was an immense favourite with them.

Many a time when things had gone hardly with them she had come with a pleasant word, smile, perhaps just a few sous to help them; and again, though she was English born, she could chatter away to them in their own tongue as fluently as themselves.

"Yes," she returned, frankly, with a smile, which showed the dimples in her cheeks, "I have come to see you again because I want something. I have come to beg of you."

"What is it you wish for? What can we poor ones give you? You are always welcome to whatever we have, that you know, I am sure," they said again, pleasantly.

"Well, I only want a few fresh sardines for Nannette; she has a great fancy for some."

"Is Madame Blaize ill, then?" asked one woman, with a little shrug, "that she could not come herself for the fish?"

"Her rheumatism is bad again, poor old thing! She slipped into the mill-pool reaching for some water in the bucket, and caught a chill."

"And as you make yourself a fish-carrier, but you are always available in these things," ended the woman, quickly.

"One must be something in this world, Manon, then why not amiable!" said Olive, smiling again. "Well, which of you have a few sardines to spare me? We heard it was a splendid catch. I suppose they are all at Carneau by this time!"

"Yes, mademoiselle; carted off at once as soon as landed. Ah, never did I see so many! I think millions of little silver fish! It is a blessing for us!" answered one of the group, in a thoughtful tone of voice.

"My husband brought me a few—but a handful," put in another woman. "You see we are glad to send all we can away; but you are very welcome to them. There were but few, as I say, for one never keeps many for oneself. I will get them for you," and she laid aside the net she was mending, and went inside her little wooden, thatched cot, while Olive sat down on the bench, and Zouave at her feet, with calm dignity.

The woman presently returned with a small bundle of sardines—about a couple of dozen laid in a tiny rush-woven creel, on some fresh-picked grass, to keep them moist and cool.

"I have put them in a little creel, that you can carry them easily. The grass will keep them cool, too, in this heat. I am sorry there are not more for you, mademoiselle."

"Thank you many times, Manon. It is very good of you to give me your fish. If Nannette did not wish for them so much, I would not have begged them from you."

"It is nothing—nothing at all. Nothing to give!" murmured the woman, placing them on the bench.

"You shall have the creel back. I will bring it when I come again," said Olive, rising to her feet, and taking up the little rush-woven basket in her hand.

"Yes, when you come, that will do well enough. Besides, my Jean can weave some more if I need them. They are useful for the little fish sometimes."

Olive did not offer to pay for the sardines, for she knew that none of them would ever receive payment from her for anything like that.

They would have felt it almost like a personal insult if she had tendered them money for what they gave freely as a gift. So she always took anything frankly enough, making it up to them in some other way. Besides which, to speak truly, she seldom possessed money to give them. Her wants were few, hence she never felt the necessity of the possession of money in any degree.

"Well, a thousand thanks, Manon. I am sure Nannette will appreciate your fish immensely. Come, Zouave, old boy; if you have quite finished contemplating that star-fish under your nose we'll be off, homeward bound," she said, moving a few paces towards the boat, high and dry on the sand.

"Ah! but you are surely not going to leave us so soon!" chorussed the group. "Stay and

talk with us a little; we are idle just now. All the work is over. It cannot master for half an hour. Tell us some news!"

"Now I have none," laughed Olive. "And please remember that I came down with the stream, and I have to get home against the stream, which makes all the difference. I expect I shall be quite late enough as it is, even if I go now at once. Too late, very likely."

"So that madame's tongue will be a little more bitter than usual, is it not?" queried one, significantly, with a little pout of her lips.

"Very probably, Jeanne," assented Olive, still smiling though. "So you see the necessity of my not staying to talk with you. Besides I have nothing to tell you. Sablette bears a good deal more than Pont l'Abbaye, I think, as a rule."

"Is mademoiselle going to the fête at Quimper? There will be grand doings in the town than!" asked another, knitting as swiftly as the wind while she spoke.

"And the theatre is to be opened for the fête just for that time only. It has been closed for long, but a grand company is coming to play. It will be splendid!" chimed in Jeanne, briskly.

"I don't suppose I am likely to go, at any rate," said Olive, with emphasis.

"Madame of course thinks that one is going to perdition straight if one goes to a theatre. Oh! the folly of it. I have no patience. As if when one is young one should not enjoy life. Bah!" and Jeanne shook her snow-white, high-starched cap in disgust at the bare idea.

"I believe madame was never young. It must be like that," satirically answered Manon.

Their appreciation of this said madame was clearly at a very low ebb.

Olive, however, answered neither yes nor nay, but took up the creel once more in her hand.

"Good-bye all," she said, with a nod of her pretty head, "we will have a nice little talk another day when I have more time to waste. Into the boat, my dog!" she added to Zouave, awaiting his orders patiently.

"There, get in, mademoiselle; I will push the boat off, and a good voyage to you," said Manon, following her to the water's edge.

"Bon voyage!" echoed the rest of the group from their wooden benches, as Manon, with one vigorous thrust of her brawny, brown arm, set the wherry once more afloat.

Olive waved her hand to them in return, and then turned the boat's head on its homeward journey, carrying away the fragrant sea-scent with her. Soon Sablette lay behind her on the sea, wrapped in the gathering evening haze.

The homeward way was far harder work than the outward one had been. The stream ran so swiftly, but the day was cooler now, and made the task less arduous.

Olive rolled her cotton sleeves up to her elbow, showing two plump, soft, dimpled arms, well shaped, and a little browned by the sun's kisses.

She never thought it mattered much whether they were brown or not. The idea never troubled her girl-mind in the faintest degree. That they were all at pretty with their soft, faint tan, never presented itself to her imagination. Vanity was not a predominant feature in Olive's disposition and character.

Having rolled up her sleeves, she thrust the big, shady straw hat farther back from her eyes to feel the evening breeze, for the sun no longer peered too keenly inquisitive into her face, as it had done earlier in the noon.

As she started from Sablette the sun-god was beginning his evening farewell to the earth, flooding the sky with crimson, orange, and purple streaks.

With various rays, lights up the clouds, those beauteous robes of Heaven,  
Innocent rolled into romantic shapes,  
The dreams of waking fancy.

Now the glow was dying out in the many-hued heavens. By the time Olive reached the little creek branching from the river the beautiful gloaming had fallen, softly, sweetly, and full of peace.

"I wonder if he is still sketching?" she had thought at several odd moments during her row back against the stream.

Of course by that most ambiguous "he" she meant the artist-stranger who had been left on the bank. There was, in fact, no one else who could have answered to the personal pronoun employed. Strange to say, she did not in this case appeal to Zouave on the matter. Zouave, her usual *fidus Achates*, was not asked. Indeed, in her inner consciousness, she was not altogether certain that she ought to have thought or to think anything about this said stranger at all.

He was only a man, just an ordinary man, of more than ordinary good appearance, perhaps, to be strictly veracious, good height, well built, and well clothed. Nothing especially out of the common, all this, truly. Nothing except those two grey eyes. They were not common orbs, Olive decided, remembering the glance from them as he passed by.

But for those deep grey eyes she felt positively certain she would not have thought about him one bit. It is a most excellent thing to be able to provide oneself with a decent excuse at a moment's notice—so useful and comforting to one's own feelings.

In this case the girl made those grey eyes the excuse for allowing her mind to dwell on this stranger; and yet even while she did so there was a vague dissatisfaction with herself on that very account. She had never heard that quotation—

Willing, or no, who will but what they must, by Destiny!  
And can no other choose.

Had she known it she might have had a fair better excuse for her thoughts than a pair of grey eyes, for who can controvert destiny? It is as immutable as the grave itself!

"This comes of living in Pont l'Abbaye!" she commented, mentally. "There is never anything to think about all the year round out of the usual monotony; consequently, when anything fresh does happen to appear, one cannot help thinking about it, for lack of something better to do."

As Olive reached the little landing-stage at the mouth of the creek she glanced along the weedy river bank with something almost akin to excitement; not that his still being there sketching would have made the smallest difference to her one way or another. She would have gone on her way to the mill exactly the same as usual, not turning a hair's breadth in his direction, or swerving from the little path through the tangled willow which led along the creek to the mill at its head.

Sil! for all that she was in the smallest measure vaguely disappointed to see that nothing human remained in the place where he had been. The bank was vacant, empty, bereft of the sketcher—the stranger had vanished.

"He's gone, Zouave!" said Olive aloud, as she shipped the oars in the boat. "Grey eyes has departed. He has sketched his sketch, and the river will see him no more. Well, we don't care two pins, old boy, do we?" she added, stepping out of the boat, and refastening it to the iron ring on shore. "He's nothing to us, so why should we care? We don't, my dog, do we?" But she carefully scanned the bank all the same while she spoke. But he really was not there. Nothing human marred the beautiful solitude in the gloaming.

"Here, Zouave! carry the creel like a good dog. This side now, hold it just here;" and she put her hand where his mouth should go. He took it obediently, wagging his tail-tuft to and fro with a pleasurable motion.

The girl waited a moment at the water's edge, then she said, meditatively,—

"I wonder what part of the river he did sketch? You and I will go and look. I expect it's that bend opposite, with the Tourelle in the distance. Most artists like that view best. We saw one take it two years ago, didn't we, my dog? And an awful mess he made of it, too; not a bit like the real thing, not half so lovely. We'll satisfy our curiosity before we go, Zouave," she ended, walking slowly along the bank to the

place where the sketcher had been but so lately, and then stopping short.

Zouave might with every justice have given Olive the "retort courteous," and avowed that it was her curiosity alone which required any satisfying. For his part, he did not care two brass pins for either the sketcher or the view which had been sketched. He might also justly have given her a gentle reproof for dragging his name into this question of the hour, since he himself felt no curiosity debarred of being satisfied, it being really and truly all on her side; but he followed after obediently enough, holding the handle of the rush creel firmly in his mouth.

"Yes I my dog, it is the view I thought, and a very lovely view too! I only hope he has painted it well—not smudged it in anyhow like that dreadful imposter did two years ago! What an awful dab it was! Do you remember how you and I looked over his shoulder while he was doing it, and how he sent us off like a pair of naughty children? Perhaps we were then, two summers ago. This one to-day looked as if he really could paint though. Heavens!" she broke in abruptly, in accent of self-condemnation. "I will not think about him any more. It's perfectly ridiculous me, Zouave, isn't it?"

Zouave's eyes certainly said yes quite plainly, but his tall never moved a hair's breadth.

"I do not know why I feel so curious about him," mused the girl, gazing over the water in the dim gloaming, and the shadows had quite covered the river now. "It must be those grey eyes; it cannot be anything else. I'm ashamed of my curiosity and of myself too. I'll banish the obnoxious subject at once and for ever from my mind. How late it's getting! what a wigging we shall get, Zouave! I tremble in my shoes at the bare thought of it. Come, right-about face, and for home."

So saying Olive turned round, the dog moving with her; suddenly she stopped short.

"Zouave!" she said, in a low tone of intense excitement, "grey eyes has left something behind him. Look!" and stooping, she picked it up from the long grass at her feet.

(To be continued.)

THE heaviest Queen is Margherita of Italy, "the Pearl of Savoy." She turns the scales at 176 lb., but her height, 5 ft. 5 in., enables her to "carry off" her stoutness and to preserve the carriage of a fine woman. Her waist measurement of 28 in. and her bust measurement of 40 in. show that, despite her advancing years, she still retains a queenly figure. Her noble profile still gives evidence of the beauty which she possessed as a girl.

THE topaz is called the stone of gratitude, and the old Roman books record the following legend from which the stone derives this attribute: The blind Emperor Theodosius used to hang a brason gong before his palace gates and sit beside it on certain days, hearing and putting to rights the grievances of any of his subjects. Those who wished for his advice and help had but to sound the gong, and immediately admission into the presence of Caesar was obtained. One day a great snake crept up to the gate and struck the brason gong with her coils, and Theodosius gave orders that no one should molest the creature and bade her tell him her wish. The snake bent her crest lowly in homage and straightway told the following tale:—

Her nest was at the base of the gateway tower, and while she had gone to find food for her young brood a strange beast covered with sharp needles had invaded her home, killed the nestlings and now held possession of the little dwelling. Would Caesar grant her justice? The emperor gave orders for the porcupine to be slain and the mother to be restored to her desolate nest. Night fell, and the sleeping world had forgotten the emperor's kindly deed, but with the early dawn a great serpent glided into the palace, up the steps and into the royal chamber and laid upon each of the emperor's closed eyelids a gleaming tops. When Emperor Theodosius awoke, he found he was no longer blind, for the mother snake had paid her debt of gratitude.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

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QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS, and relieve the distressing symptoms so prevalent with the sex. Price 1/- or 2/- depending on three times the quantity, of all Chemists. Send an envelope on receipt of 15 or 24 stamps, by E. T. TOWLE & CO., Manufacturers, Dryden St., Nottingham.

*Beware of Imitations, injurious and worthless.*

## ROYAL AJAX CYCLES

ON MONTHLY PAYMENTS. Enormous stock. New and secondhand, from 10s. MONTHLY. Carriage paid. Fro wheels and rim brakes. Illustrated Price Lists Post Free TO ANY ADDRESS.—THE BRITISH CYCLE MANUFACTURING CO., 45, Everton Road, Liverpool. (Established 1887.)

## KEARSLEY'S 100 YEARS' REPUTATION WIDOW WELCH'S FEMALE PILLS.

Awarded Certificate of Merit for the cure of Irregularities, Amenorrhoea, and all Female Complaints. They have the approval of the Medical Profession. Beware of Imitations. The only genuine and original are in *White Paper Wrappers*. Boxes, 1s. 6d. and 2s. 6d., of 24, 48, or 96 pills, containing three times the pills, Ointments, or 24 stamps, by the makers, G. and G. KEARSLEY, 17, North Street, Westminster. Sold in the Colonies.



## KEATING'S POWDER KILLS FLEAS, BUGS, MOTHS, BEETLES.

TINS 3° 6° & 1°  
THE NEW BELLOWS 9°

THE latest fashionable stimulant is camphor. Taken in small and regular doses, it is said to make the complexion creamy, but the ultimate effect is harmful.

## FACETIE.

"OLD Skinner really lost all his money, didn't he?" "Yes; his bankruptcy was a failure."

NEVER allude to a dressmaker as Miss Sew and Sew.

FRIEND : "Hello, Jinks, how is your cold?" Jinks (hoarsely) : "Which one?"

"ARE you sure she will marry the poor one?" "Yes; he is the only one who refuses to consult her father."

A : "Your smoking-room is beautifully arranged." Mr. Henpeck : "Yes; if only I were allowed to smoke in it."

MRS. MOTHER : "Don't you find Jack Wheeler rather rough?" Trif : "Yes, mamma. And yet he says he shaves every day."

"YOU must have perseverance," said the young physician's friend. "No," was the reply, "what I want is patients."

"YES," said the dentist, "I have a pull in the best society. You see, I know how to fill vacancies, and my work is in everybody's mouth."

HOMES : "Well, how is the new cook getting on?" Mrs. Hobbs : "She's getting on her things preparatory to leaving."

FLOSSIE : "Didn't you feel it terribly when your engagement was broken?" "Yes; and I had another dreadful blow the same day—my new dress came home and didn't fit."

WIFE : "I'm tired to death. Been having the baby's picture taken by the instantaneous process." Husband : "How long did it take?" Wife : "About four hours."

TRAMP : "Pardon me, but have you seen a policeman?" Pedestrian : "No." Tramp : "No! Then will you please be kind enough to hand me your purse and your watch?"

Mrs. NICENFELLO (cautiously) : "Why are you so cold and distant?" Sweet Girl (quietly) : "The fire has gone out, and this sofa is too heavy for me to move up to your chair."

He (fishing for loving protestations) : "My angel, I do not believe I am worthy to be your husband." She (thoughtfully) : "That's just what my mother says."

He : "Nellie, just look at that man over there. I don't think I ever saw any one so plain!" She : "Hush, dear; you forget yourself."

"LOOK here!" said an excited man to a druggist. "You gave morphine for quinine this morning." "Is that so?" said the druggist. "Then you owe me sixpence."

WIFE (emphatically) : "I can't put it off another week. We must clean house." Husband (coaxingly) : "No, don't. Let's touch a match to the place and begin fresh."

"WHAT is your idea of a statesman?" "H'm; well, a statesman is a politician who gets what he wants without letting his own party know how he got it."

"PHAT the matter wid yes, Regan? Yez look hurted." "Faith! Laشت night Ol thought Casey phwat Ol thought av him, an' ut appears he thought worse av ma."

"Now, honestly, Maud, didn't Jack propose last evening?" "Why, y-e-s-i! But how did you guess?" "I noticed that you didn't have that worried look this morning."

SYMPATHETIC MOTHER : "I can't understand why you should have so much trouble with your wife. Perhaps she only married you to please her parents." Son : "Not much. She fan't that kind."

"I MUST have been a fool when I married," said little Tompynke, glaring fiercely at his wife. "Certainly, my dear," said Mrs. Tompynke sweetly. "It couldn't come on so badly all in two years, could it?"

"I AM going to a masquerade ball this evening, and I want an appropriate dress," he said to the costumer. "What is your business?" "Oh, I'm a milkman." "Ah, then you'd better put on a pair of pumps and go disguised as a waterfall."

MRS. SPINKS : "Where is the money you have been saving for a rainy day?" Mr. Spinks : "In the Neverbreak Savings Bank." Mrs. Spinks : "Well, give me a cheque for some of it. I want new waterproof."

FRIEND : "I know you are a proud and happy father, and I've no doubt that baby is a regular cherub, and all that; but I don't see why you need hold your head quite so high." Young Father : "That's to keep from dropping asleep."

MRS. NABOR : "And so the doctor ordered you to give your husband whisky for his rheumatism. Does it seem to do him any good?" Mrs. Next-door : "John says it does him lots of good, but I notice the pains come upon him more frequently than ever."

"SOUP!" said the waiter. "Yes, sir; there's consommé and a purée of beans. Which will you have?" "I said soup," said the unsophisticated young man; "I don't want none of yer consommé, and I don't want no puréed beans. Soup, do you hear? Soup!"

CROCKERY DEALER : "Yes, we always put one good pitcher in every basket of cracked ones." New Clerk : "What's that for?" Crockery dealer : "Why, blockhead, the woman who gets the good pitcher sends in a lot of other women who buy the cracked pitchers."

THEATRICAL MANAGER : "Rush off and engage the heroine of that fashionable divorce scandal for next season. Tell her we'll furnish the play, and wardrobe, and—" Assistant : "Too late. The editor of a magazine has already started her to writing a novel."

"Isn't the weather uncertain?" exclaimed the man with a cold. "I don't know," answered the ungenial acquaintance, "I haven't been able to make up my mind yet whether it's the weather that's uncertain or the weather experts."

Mrs. NEWLYWED : "I was going to have some sponge-cake as a surprise for you, dear, but I confess it is a failure." Mr. Newlywed : "What was the matter?" Mrs. Newlywed : "I don't know for sure, but I think the druggist sent me the wrong kind of sponges."

WABASH (at the club) : "Oh, by the way, I've got a good story to tell you, old man. I'm sure I never told it to you before." Dearborn : "You are positive it's a good one, are you?" Wabash : "Certainly; I—" Dearborn (resignedly) : "Go ahead, then. You never told it to me."

MAMMA : "What is Willie crying about?" Bridget : "Shure, ma'am, he wanted to go across the street to Tommy Green's." Mamma : "Well, why didn't you let him go?" Bridget : "They were havin' charades, he said, ma'am, and I wasn't sur'e as he'd had 'em yet."

COAL MERCHANT : "I say, Premium, I want to insure my coal-yard against fire. What's the cost of a policy for £1,000?" Insurance Agent : "What coal is it? Same kind you sent me last?" Merchant : "Yes, it is." Agent : "Oh, I wouldn't insure it if I were you; it won't burn!"

A MAN recently applied at one of the regimental depôts for admission into the army. It was seen, however, that the man had a cork leg, so, of course, he was refused. The officer urged that he would be useless, inasmuch as he would be unable to run. "Oh!" replied the man, "I thought you didn't want men who 'run'!"

DR SMOKER : "Do you know, my dear, an eminent scientist has discovered that tobacco arrests the development of bacteria?" Wife : "Does it really? You wouldn't want your little wife to be eaten up by those horrid bacteria, would you, dear? Where's your other pipe? I'll become a smoker myself."

MOTHER (at a reception) : "Why didn't you accompany Mr. Nicenello out to supper?" Sweet Girl : "I prefer to go with papa." Mother : "Mr. Nicenello is devoted to you, and seemed much dejected by your refusal. I thought you—or rather liked him." Sweet Girl (blushing) : "I do." Mother : "Then why didn't you go out to supper with him?" Sweet Girl : "Well, if you must know, it's because I'm ravenously hungry."

AN officer, inspecting the regimental kits in a certain barrack-room, said to a private: "Now, Private Smith, have you a complete kit?" "Yes, sir." "Is every article furnished with buttons?" "No, sir." "No! Explain yourself, sir! Tell me what article is lacking buttons?" "Well, sir, my towel has no buttons on it!" The officer smiled, and passed on to the next man.

Mrs. SCRIMPF : "I asked your daughter a very important question last night, and she referred me to you." Old Gent : "Humph! What did you ask her?" "I asked her if she'd marry me." "Well, she won't." "Eh? Has she said so?" "No; but from what I know of the girl, I don't believe she would have bothered herself about me if she had really wanted you."

JINKS : "Mink's wife is a mighty clever little woman. If there were more women like her there would be fewer divorces. She knows how to keep the domestic machinery running smoothly. Did you hear what she gave her husband for a Christmas present?" Binks : "No, what was it?" Jinks : "A big leather-covered box containing 150,000 collar buttons."

As she paused for breath he started for the door. "Where are you going?" she asked. "I am going to telegraph to Marconi," he replied, "and tell him that after he has perfected his wireless telegraphy there is another field of much the same nature for him to invade." "What is it?" she demanded. "I want him to devote his intellect to the invention of a voiceless curtain lecture."

"No, mamma," sobbed the unhappy young wife. "George doesn't love me. I found it out last night." "Oh, my poor child," the mother exclaimed, "what has happened?" "Ab, I see it all! You found a letter in his pocket!" "It wasn't that," the miserable young woman answered; "he came home and told me that he had his life insured." "Well?" "Well, if he really loved me, wouldn't he have had mine insured instead of selfishly going and having all this protection put upon himself?"

A WELL DRESSED man entered a florist's shop the other day, threw down a coin, and said he wanted some flowers to take home. He was quite uneasy, evidently tapering off a spree, and the flowers were apparently intended as a domestic peace offering. The florist picked out a dozen chrysanthemums, and the caller started to leave. At the door he hesitated. "I say," he said, thickly, "what's these flowers called?" "Chrysanthemums." The customer shook his head. "Gotter have something easier," he said. "Gimme a dozen roses."

THOUGH it was his misfortune, and not his fault, that he stuttered, it was amusing to hear him in a love passage. "Do you really, really care so very much for me, darling?" she softly queried. "Dad—dad—does a dud—dad—dad—duck—cuc—cuc—care for water, sus—sus—sweet!" Indeed I dad—dad—do, dad—dad—darling! You are the one pup—pup—priceless pup—pup—pearl among pup—pup—pearl, pup—pup—Polly! You are que—que—queen of my heart, dad—dad—darling! The pup—pup—power that bub—bub—bends me like a reed—at thy fut—fuf—feet!" And she apparently believed him.

"JONES is a terribly ignorant man." "What makes you think that?" "Why, I was talking with him the other night on the subject of music, and it turned out that he actually didn't know the difference between a sonata and a symphony." "He didn't?" "It's a positive fact. And yet Jones had always impressed me as being a rather well-informed man." "Oh, well, I expect there are others who don't know the difference between a sonata and a symphony. To tell the truth, I don't myself!" "My dear fellow! You must be joking." "Never more serious in my life." "Well, well, I should never have believed that possible. In the nineteenth century, too!" "Well, I don't, and I am not ashamed to confess my ignorance. What is the difference?" "Well—er—er—it's like this. A—er—sonata, you know—I mean a symphony—Great Scott! Is it twelve o'clock already? You must excuse me. Fact is, I'm in an awful hurry."

## SOCIETY.

On Thursday, May 3rd, at 1.30, a matinée will be held at the Palace Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, in aid of "Punch's" fund for the Hospital for Sick Children (Great Ormond Street, W.C.). A most attractive programme has been arranged, and many leading London artists will appear. The latest war pictures will be displayed on the Biograph, and the unrivaled Palace Orchestra will perform under the direction of Mr. A. Plumpton. Apart from this, the cause readily lends itself to general sympathy, owing to the excellent management and splendid results attained by the Hospital Committee, and it is sad to think this splendid institution (which, by the way, owes its existence to Charles Dickens) should now be in desperate need of funds. Some idea of the good work done by this hospital may be gained from the fact that over 2,000 in-patients were treated last year. "Every little helps," and any subscription, however small, will be gratefully received if sent to "Punch's" Office, Bouverie-street, London, W.C.

The Kaiser is going to present the Sultan with a monumental fountain designed after his own ideas by a German architect. When ready this fountain will be erected in one of the squares of the Turkish capital.

The Duke and Duchess of York will probably return to St. James's Palace for the season early in the second week of May. The Duke and Duchess will spend the Whitsuntide holidays at Sandringham, proceeding thence to Bagshot Park on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Connaught for Ascot Races.

The Tsar has given his consent to the betrothal of the Grand Duchess Helene Vladimirovna of Russia to Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and it is expected that the engagement will be made public very shortly. Prince Ferdinand, who is at present staying at San Remo, is able to pay frequent visits to Beaulieu, where the Grand Duchess Helene is at present living with her mother.

The Prince and Princess of Wales will probably pass the Whitsuntide holidays in Paris, leaving Marlborough House on the evening of Friday, June 1st. The Prince would return to London in time for Ascot Races, which will begin this year on Tuesday, June 12th, but the Princess might very likely stay on in Paris for a few days longer, as the King of Denmark will then be there.

PRINCE AND PRINCESS LOUIS OF BATTENBERG have taken up their residence at Frogmore Lodge, near Windsor, which has been lent to them by the Queen for six months. Princess Louis is to accompany the Queen to Balmoral shortly before Whitsuntide, but she will return to Frogmore for Ascot race week, and is to receive visits during the summer from Prince and Princess Francis Joseph of Battenberg and the Countess von Erbach-Schönberg.

The Queen of the Netherlands will arrive at Oberhof, near Coburg, on May 15th for a stay of four weeks. During her sojourn in Germany her Majesty will take the opportunity of visiting her great-uncle, the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, at the Wartburg or at Wilmers, and she will also have a meeting with the German Emperor and Empress, most probably at Potsdam. Queen Wilhelmina sent an autograph letter of sympathy to Madame Joubert on hearing of her husband's decease, in which she expressed her deep sorrow at the death of the brave General.

The Queen of the Netherlands and her mother, Queen Emma, are to leave The Hague early in May for the season, when they will proceed on their annual visit to Germany. Queen Wilhelmina and Queen Emma intend to pass three weeks at Oberhof, in the Thuringian Forest, and they will visit the King and Queen of Württemberg at Stuttgart and the Princess of Waldeck-Pyrmont at Arolsen. The Duchess of Albany and her children are to spend a month in Holland during the summer, when they will be the guests of the two Queens at the beautiful Chateau of Soestdyk, in Gelderland, which is famous for its fine gardens and vast beech-forest.

## STATISTICS.

THE population of China is estimated at 308,000,000.

THE area of Africa is eleven and a half millions of square miles.

MORE than 75 per cent. of the trade of Egypt is with British possessions.

FRANCE has more persons over sixty years of age than any other country; Ireland comes next.

THE cemeteries around London cover 2,000 acres, and the land they occupy represents a capital of £20,000,000.

GREAT BRITAIN owns 355,000 square miles in the west of Africa, 960,000 in the south and south-east, and 1,255,000 square miles in British East Africa.

## GEMS.

PUT your strength in your fight instead of in your challenge.

EVERY life touches many other lives. Let us move more softly through the world lest our touch be a harsh and hurtful touch.

LIFE strikes many an unheeded, prophetic little note. A word, a trivial happening, gives hint, like a theme in music, of something that is to be more or less recurrent all the way along.

EVERY individual has the first right to his individuality. Few persons would dispute this, and yet few act as though they believed it. They talk about moulding the character of the child, which means to press him into some man-made form, and so force upon him a fictitious individuality. But to give a child his first right is to aid him to develop, to grow.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

MINT SAUCE.—Well wash some fresh mint. Pick the leaves off the stalks, chop them very finely. You require about two tablespoonfuls. Put them in the tureen with one and a half tablespoonfuls of castor sugar. Let this stand about half an hour, then pour on a quarter of a pint of good vinegar. Stir it well, and let it stand for two hours if possible, to allow the vinegar to get well flavoured. If mint sauce is scarce, use mint vinegar.

PORTED SHRIMPS.—Choose shrimps as large as possible. Shell them. You will require one pint, measured after they are shelled. Pour four ounces of butter into a saucepan, and let it melt; then add the shrimps, one blade of pounded mace, and cayenne to taste. Heat the shrimps gradually in the butter, taking care they do not boil. Then place the mixture in clean, dry pots, and when cold cover it with clarified butter. This keeps it bright, and so it will keep longer than it otherwise would.

MACARONI A LA BOLOGNE.—Ingredients: Half a pound of macaroni, two pounds of spinach, one gill of brown sauce, two ounces of grated Parmesan cheese, pepper and salt. Break the macaroni in pieces about one inch long, throw it into fast boiling salted water and boil till tender. Having carefully picked over and washed the spinach, put it in a pan with two tablespoonfuls of water and boil till soft, keeping it well stirred; then drain off all water, pressing it well, and rub through a hair or fine wire sieve. Now mix it with brown sauce. Put a layer of macaroni in a fireproof dish, then a layer of spinach, next a good sprinkling of cheese, and dust over a little pepper and salt. Continue these layers, having cheese at the top. Put a cover on the dish and bake in a hot oven for about half an hour. Serve at once in the dish in which it was cooked.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

In proportion to its size, Great Britain has eight times as many railways as the United States.

ARTESIAN wells have a daily period of ebb and flow, like the ocean tides, only the process is reversed.

THE tonic qualities of sea air are due to a third of a grain of salt per cubic yard and a trace of iodine.

INSTEAD of an engagement ring, the Japanese lover gives his sweetheart a piece beautiful silk for her sash.

A CANAL connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea existed as early as 600 years before the Christian era. Its length was ninety-two miles.

A FOREIGN savant has declared that a most prevalent cause of hysteria in women is high-heeled shoes, and that if the objectionable boots are abandoned the hysteria will cease.

PROMOTION in the Russian Army is exceedingly slow. It takes from six to seven years for a captain to become a lieutenant-colonel, and four for a lieutenant-colonel to become a colonel.

IN the neighbourhood of the Gold Coast monkeys are now almost extinct, and last year the colony could collect only 67,680 monkey skins, whereas four years ago 168,405 skins were exported.

THE Turkish woman is marriageable at the age of nine years, and by Turkish law, if married, she is compelled to manage her own property, and dispose of two-thirds of her fortune.

THE famous Alpine plant the edelweiss is to be protected by law in the Austrian Alps. The removal of the plant by the roots and its sale in large quantities are now forbidden by Royal decree.

ONCE each year, on its last night, the thousands of Hungarians of New York reproduce a small corner of their fatherland in one of the large assembly-halls, and give themselves up to games and other pleasure.

THE sheep possesses a less degree of nervous energy than the horse, ox, or pig; but it is capable of enduring great extremes of heat and cold with less inconvenience, and possesses a more vigorous digestion than those animals.

THE smallest and oldest sect in the world is to be found in the small city of Nablus, in North Palestine. They number about 150 souls, and have defied the ravages of war, poverty, and oppression for 3,000 years.

SOME of the natives of Australia have a queer idea of beauty. They cut themselves with shells, keep the wounds open for a long time, and when they heal huge scars are the result. These scars are deemed highly ornamental.

AN interesting calculation has been made which shows that a pound of good coal equals the work of one man for one day. One square mile of a seam of coal only four feet deep would exceed the work of 1,000,000 men for twenty years.

THERE are several kinds of farms, profitable ones, too, of which little mention is made to the public. Many herbs are grown on farms devoted to them, and they are a product not overdone by growers. In New York are acres devoted to the growth of peppermint. In Illinois are farms where the castor bean is raised for the castor oil that it contains. Many farms which have lost their productiveness could be made to grow sage, catnip, thoroughwort, and the other vegetable necessities of the pharmacopœia. This business is one of the few that is not ruined by competition. Rose farms are to be found in different sections of the country, and there is a sweetening in this method of earning a livelihood, although that is not all there is in it by a good deal. In California some rose farms are carried on to raise roses for rose jelly.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. K.—Yes, write and ask for the information.

F. L.—A general is higher in rank than a major-general.

ALWYN.—No, but you can see them at the British Museum.

R. E.—The almanac date for beginning of spring is 21st March.

LAURIE.—You had better get a proper will drawn up by a solicitor.

A. J.—A "neuropath" means a person of extremely nervous temperament.

PUZZLED.—The name of the famous defender of Mafeking is pronounced Bayden-Powell.

DOUNTYFUL.—Every machine you mention is thoroughly good and possesses the qualities for value.

L. S.—On the "Royal Standard" there is the Irish harp, the Scottish lion, and the three lions of England.

S. P.—It is often done with soft stale breadcrumbs alone; sometimes a little prepared French chalk is added to the breadcrumbs.

HETTY.—By all means give up all idea of the stage. We are confident from your letter that it would only lead to disappointment.

GERALDINE.—Do not fold it up, and do not keep it in a hot place. The tendency you complain of largely depends on the quality of the garment.

HETTY.—To remove grease marks from wall-paper, try in first place rubbing with stale bread, drawing always one way, or dab with benzine.

FLORRIE.—Stains in carpets may be removed by rubbing the part with a lemon cut in half, and at same time dabbing with a soft cloth held in the other hand.

FRITZ.—There is nothing improper in friends of the opposite sexes exchanging photographs; it really need not indicate any other feeling than ordinary friendship.

ALFRED.—What you should say in reply to the toast of your health depends altogether upon what is said by the man who proposes the toast; on that point you give us no information.

CONSTANT READER.—Files will be kept from disfiguring pictures and mirror frames by brushing these over with the liquid in which onions have been boiled. This does no injury to the frames.

VERA.—Nearly all varieties of fish may be served in a curry. Its preparation is simple. Make a white sauce and flavour with curry powder, after having added the fish pickled in coarse bits.

L. V.—Very often time eradicates them, but not always. You must avoid eating or drinking anything at all indigestible, and be careful never to use violent friction to the face. Bathe in cool water.

TRROUBLED.—You are not liable for income-tax if your income does not exceed £100 per annum. If you have been charged wrongly, apply to the Inland Revenue authorities for remission of the money paid.

A. R.—The cottage piano should always stand in a diagonal or slanting position in a corner of the room, never flat against the wall, as (among other reasons) that wears the instrument and spoils its tone.

BRENDA.—It is said that when ivory has become yellow, it may be whitened again through being soaked in water, then exposed to the light in a closed glass case. Ivory should never be laid in the sun or on a mantelpiece.

WORRIED.—It depends entirely upon the young lady's general disposition; if she is naturally undemonstrative, that would account for her reticent behaviour; but it probably by no means indicates any want of real affection on her part.

S. H.—No length of desertion by either husband or wife allows of either legally marrying again without a previous divorce in due form of law. As to whether you could obtain a divorce, your very best course is to consult a solicitor.

NORA.—You must surely be aware of the fact that every one, in a more or less degree, is afflicted in the same manner when out in the cold, and that your feature presenting a pink or red appearance would not call for any special remark.

M. M.—If misfortune should overtake Lord Roberts personally, Lord Kitchener would then be in chief command of the British forces advancing into the Transvaal; Sir Redvers Buller's sphere of action has been distinctly limited to Natal.

JESUS.—You require a strong tonic, and, to avoid straining the eyes in every possible way, wear glasses, &c. Rub vaseline very gently indeed into the edges of eyelids at night, and never by any chance whatever rub them open in the morning. Bathe them often with warm milk-and-water with a sponge.

LOV.—Boil for twenty minutes in suds of about ninety-eight degrees, to which ammonia has been added in the proportion of a teaspoonful to a gallon. Then wash the dirt out by pressing and squeezing, something in the same way as you would wash lace. Rinse in two lots of water of the same temperature as the suds, adding a very little blue to the last if the garments are white. Squeeze as dry as you can, and hang out till nearly dry. Then iron under a cloth.

WORRIED HOUSEWIFE.—Grimy-looking matting is a household horror, and few people, except the absolute manufacturers, know how to keep it in good condition. But a good wash with water in which bran has been boiled, or in weak salt and water, will speedily restore it to its pristine condition, if it be afterwards well dried with a cloth.

GARAVAN.—To clean hair brushes, put half a teaspoonful of liquid ammonia in a quart of cold water, and let the bristles of the brush soak in it for a few moments, when all dirt will be removed. Take care that the back of the brush does not become wet. Hair brushes should never be washed in hot water, as it causes the bristles to become soft.

RINSE.—White shawls and flannels which have become yellow may be whitened by hanging them in a barrel or deep box containing some small bits of sulphur (brimstone) on which a little methylated spirit has been sprinkled, then set fire to. See that the clothes are beyond the flame. Cover all with a blanket, and continue for twenty minutes, turning goods once.

GERALD.—A method of renovating brown leather is the following: Take four ounces of yellow ochre, half a teaspoonful of sweet oil, and mix them well together. To this add four ounces of pipeclay and one ounce of starch, pouring on the whole sufficient boiling water to make a cream. Spread the mixture when cold on the leather, and when dry rub it in well and brush off.

## MODDER RIVER.

MAX have called me the Modder River,  
Only an hour ago.  
Old am I as the world : forever  
Shall I live and flow.  
None have seen my crystal fountains  
Gush at the word of God ;  
My path down the burning mountains  
None but myself has trod !

In the red levels only  
Along my roedy brink,  
From the kraal the Kaffir lonely  
Drives the dusty flock to drink.  
I have been content to gimmer  
Under the full white moon ;  
Or over the veldt to shimmer  
In the blistering heat of noon.

I asked no place in story  
Where my sister rivers abide ;  
Nor dreamed of the red red glory  
Should one day be mine.  
None mighty nations matter  
Of me in wrath and shame ;  
Pale lips of mothers utter  
In fear my dreaded name !

Over scarlet veldts, defended  
In fire and lead and blood.  
Till the scarlet tale is ended  
I rush my turbid flood.  
O sickening slaughter, steaming  
To the pitiless brasson sky.—  
Why wake me from my dreaming ?  
I craved not fame, not I !

CUNO.—Firm cold potatoes would do, or wash, peel, and parboil six large ones. Then slice them a moderate thickness. Beat up an egg, put on a dish, and add to it an ounce of butter just melted in the oven, and half a tablespoonful of breadcrumbs, the same of chopped ham or tongue, and a little chopped parsley. Mix well. Dip each slice of potato into this mixture, then place it in plenty of fat just on the boil. Drain on paper when a golden brown, and serve very hot on a fancy paper.

OLIVE.—Take three or four dozen oysters, strain off the liquor and boil; then add an equal quantity of milk, and two and a half ounces of butter which has been rubbed till perfectly smooth, with a large tablespoonful of flour; let it boil and then throw in the oysters. When their edges curl they are done. This sauce will be improved by pounding the soft paste of six raw oysters through a sieve into it; mace and cayenne pepper may be added; serve boiling hot. It makes enough for six persons.

ERASIS.—Chop half a handful of mushrooms with the whites of six hard-boiled eggs. Put yolks through a sieve. Rub together one tablespoonful of butter and two of flour, and add pint of scalding hot milk; stir until thick, add the yolk of one raw egg and the chopped mushrooms and whites and yolks; season with cayenne, pepper and salt. Cool, then form into chops, dip in fine breadcrumbs, then in beaten egg-yolk and again in crumbs. Fry a delicate brown, put a piece of macaroni in each chop, and arrange about a mound of mashed potatoes.

NUNZ.—This is a very delicate way of serving eggs, and is specially nice for a convalescent or anyone with a capricious appetite. For a breakfast for three persons use five eggs, one good tablespoonful butter, one teaspoonful salt, half a cupful of milk, and a dash of white pepper. Put the butter in a double boiler, like those used for making porridge, or if not a basin in a saucepan of boiling water will do, and set it where the water will boil steadily. Beat eggs well and add to them the salt, pepper and milk, pour into boiler with the butter, which will have melted by this time, and stir till a thick creamy mass is formed. Take from fire directly, and serve in a warm dish without delay. A little finely-chopped parsley on the top is an improvement.

DUBIOUS.—As the bridegroom is a relation, and the bride is quite unknown to you, we should suggest your sending the wedding present to his address, and he will send it on to the home of the bride's mother, so that it can be exhibited with the rest of the presents at the wedding.

AWKWARD.—You cannot make yourself graceful by thinking about it. If you are really as awkward as you say, you had better go in for gymnastics and fencing. It is not a bit of good for your mother to be always telling you to hold yourself better: what you want is physical training.

TONY.—We fear it is quite impossible for you to prevent dreams; they are a natural accompaniment to a night's rest. Of course, if you are afflicted with nightmares and bad dreams, that is another matter, and is probably indicative of a bad state of health. You should be careful not to eat indigestible food before retiring to rest, and we should say it would be well for you to see a doctor.

MA BELLE.—It is exceedingly difficult to judge whether a face is pretty or not without seeing it; from your description it should be little short of perfect, but even though a person has perfectly shaped features and beautiful colouring, it is not necessarily a pretty face; so much depends upon expression that many people with irregular features and not particularly good complexion can be far more attractive, if only they have a bright and pleasing expression.

IGNORANT.—Whether you take off your gloves at afternoon tea or not entirely depends on what you eat. It has nothing to do with your going by invitation or not, as it is simply this:—If you are eating anything which would soil your gloves, such as hot buttered toast, or hot tea-cakes, you would naturally take off your right-hand glove, as would not spoil it. If you choose a dry biscuit, or anything else which would not hurt your gloves, you could keep them on, of course.

MISERABLE.—The best way to overcome your difficulty by a stern determination not to feel abashed or shy when in conversation with people. Try to lose all self-consciousness, and try to feel just as much at ease as you would be talking with your own folks at home. Do not think on your defect—that will only make it worse, and you have no cause to make yourself miserable about it. You must not expect to see your answer in next *LONDON READER* to receipt of your letter; a fortnight must always elapse before an answer to a query can appear.

C. B.—Dust the whole piece carefully then with the point of your first finger, occasionally moisten with a very little water; run along the ribbed stripes of the right side, bearing a little heavily where the spots are; finish one stripe at a time, turn it over, and do the same along that stripe at the wrong side, and so continue till you have rubbed out all the spots. While doing as above the fabric should lie on a soft cloth or flannel covered with a soft sheet. If this is not sufficient, and the spots will not stir, you might try pure alcohol diluted with water; have a piece of fine flannel over your finger; occasionally moisten with the alcohol, and proceed as above, but the plain water is safest.

IN WANT OF ADVICE.—There is no doubt that a seafaring life has many disadvantages and drawbacks, and unless there is a very strong inclination for it it is well to be avoided. But it is always a good plan, if possible, to allow a boy to have one voyage, and let him determine for himself whether the life is all his fancy painted it. In the majority of cases, such trials have the effect of curing any great desire on the part of a youth for the sea, but where it happens that it merely confirms him in his choice of making his living, then it is mere foolishness to try and prevent it, as he will doubtless compass his object sooner or later without permission, if he cannot obtain his wish with it.

AMBITIOUS.—We can only recommend you to put such silly dreams out of your head; it would be nothing short of madness to fling up a good situation "to try your luck on the stage." You would have luck, indeed, if you succeeded in getting on the boards at all, and, in all probability, you would have had plenty of time to regret your rash step long before you attained even so much success. Of course, if you really have exceptional talent, and are fortunate enough to get a hearing from a theatrical manager, there is just the chance that he might give you a trial, but such cases are very rare, and there are many professional actresses and actors, too, who find it almost impossible to obtain engagements.

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## THE WHITE SPECTRE.

ONE in every eleven of the population of Great Britain dies of consumption. Nearly half those who reach middle age suffer or have suffered, from some variety of it. No less than a quarter of a million (250,000) are dying of it at the present moment.

Consumption is not *inherited* but *contracted*; the germs attacking chiefly the weak and under-nourished. In true consumption the lungs and other tissues are destroyed, including the bones. No remedy for it has yet been found. There is therefore plenty of reason for the fear people feel of the White Spectre of the North.

Did Mrs. Dinah Keep have consumption? Six medical men said she had. And they believed they were right. Still she disappointed them all by getting well. She lost her good health in January, 1878. She had been confined, and after that event failed to regain her natural strength. Food—the only source of strength—had no attractions for her; she didn't want it.

Of course she ate a mouthful now and then; else she had starved to death. But those bits of food set going such a palpitation of the heart and such pains in the chest, she wished she had let them alone. It was a miserable dilemma.

"Often," said Mrs. Keep, lately, "I was seized with windy spasms, and for hours the pain was agonising. At night I was so bad sometimes that I used to walk the room till nearly morning. Even at best I got less rest than I needed."

"After a time I began to have a cough—a hollow-sounding cough such as you hear in consumptives. And then the night sweats! My linen was soaked with them. All this looked like consumption, and I knew what the end of that must be. I wasted and lost flesh until I hardly knew myself. My clothes no longer fitted me—they merely hung on me."

"And the weakness that went with it! I never fancied before what the word weakness meant. I could neither wash nor dress myself. There was no more tripping up and down-stairs for me; the people picked me up and carried me. Fortunately for my friends I was a light burden. All day long I lay back in an easy

chair and watched others go about. My own working days were gone for ever. At least so I thought.

"I should soon have to leave this bright world, and see no more of my little children who were so dear to me. But God's will be done."

"Often during the night a feeling of suffocation came over me, and I gasped and struggled for breath. Sometimes I did not expect to live till morning."

"No less than six doctors, at different periods attended me; and all of them, one after another, finally gave me up. They said I had consumption, and must die of it sooner or later. And yet I went on for ten years in this way, now better, now worse."

"Many a time my husband was sure I was dying, and on several occasions the prayers of the Church were offered up for me."

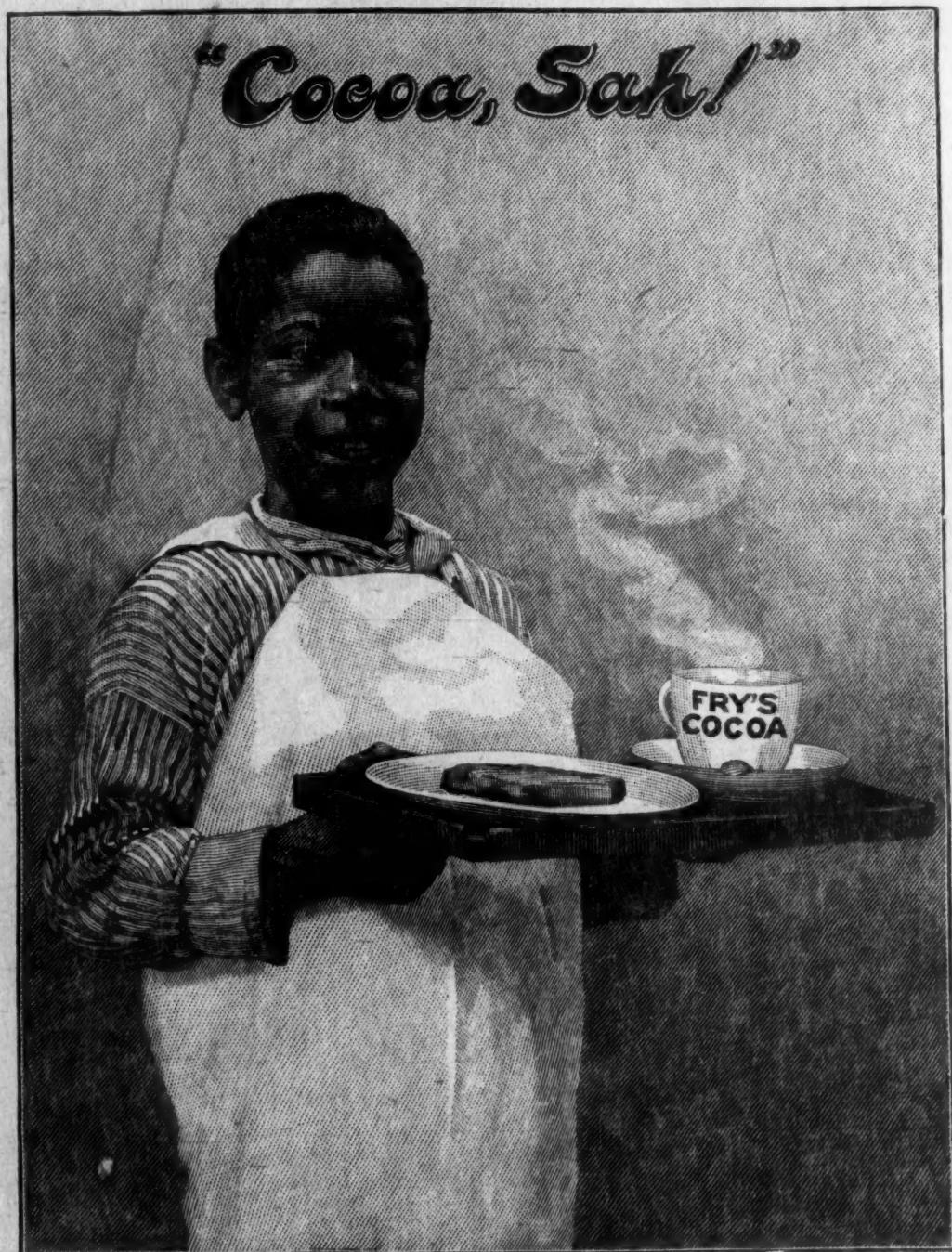
"In 1888, at a time when I appeared to be at death's door, my husband read in a small book about cases as bad as mine having been cured by Mother Seigel's Syrup. It looked as if it were impossible, but to gratify him I began taking the medicine, and never looked back after that day. In a few weeks I got back my appetite, and my food agreed with me. Gradually my strength returned, and *in six months I was in perfect health*. Since then I have never known any illness, and that is years ago now, showing how complete the cure was. That I am indebted to Mother Seigel's Syrup for my life and health there is no doubt, and you may publish what I say as widely as you choose."—Mrs. Dinah Keep, Chalgrove Field House, 12, Magdalen Road, Cowley, Oxford, August 3, 1899.

Mrs. Keep's trouble was bad enough, but it was not consumption; it was dyspepsia with wasting—an imitation of consumption which constantly deceives the best doctors, as this instance proves.

Prevalent as consumption is, there is a host of chronic dyspeptics who have the appearance and many of the symptoms of lung disease, but who would recover if they were treated for the digestive disorder, for which the surest remedy is Mother Seigel's Syrup.

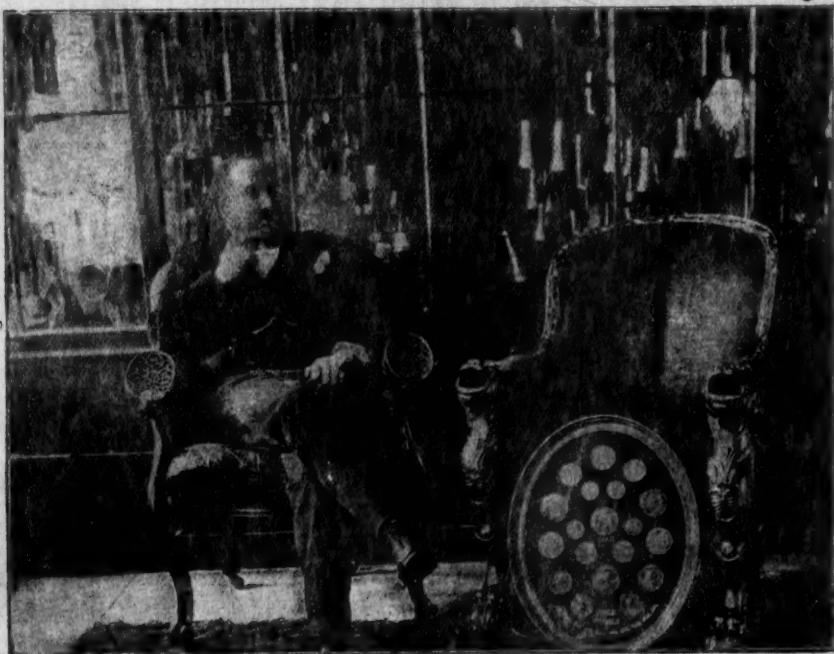
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